

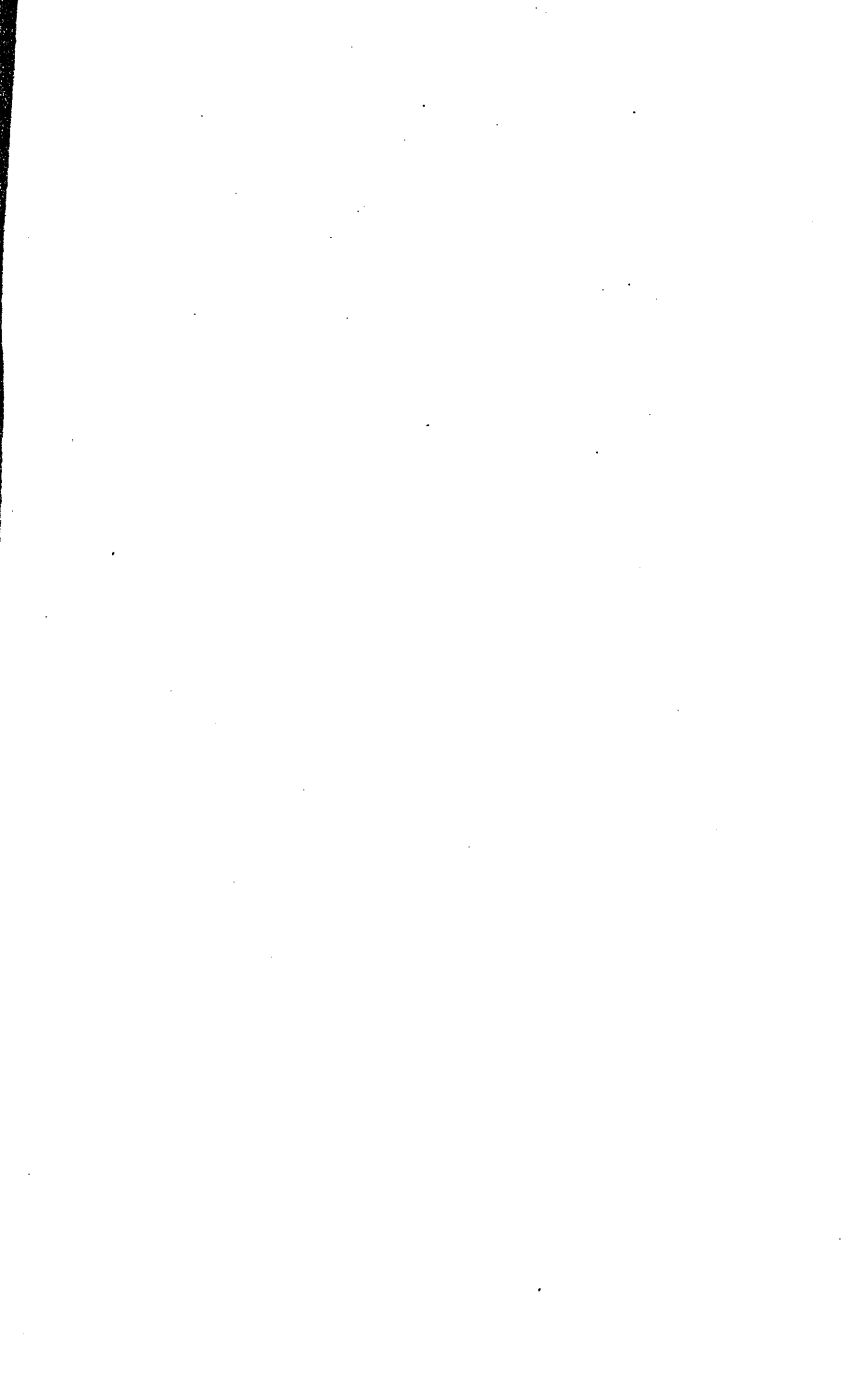
**MEDITATION
THE REVELATION
ST. JOHN**

G. P. TREVILLAN

ATIONS ON
RELATION OF
JOHN
TREVELYAN

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Meditations on
THE REVELATION OF
ST. JOHN

OTHERWISE CALLED
THE APOCALYPSE

Meditations on THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN

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THE APOCALYPSE

By

G. P. TREVELYAN

Vicar of St. Stephen's, Bournemouth, 1912-1928

With a Foreword by

FATHER SEYZINGER, C.R.

*'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us
from our sins by His Blood; and He made
us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His
God and Father; to Him be the glory and
the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'*

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FOREWORD

By

FATHER SEYZINGER, C.R.

THE Author, who has fulfilled a long and honourable ministry, now renders good service to the Church in the composition of this series of meditations.

Amid all the intricate and complex problems of the modern world, which none can contemplate without the gravest thought, it is certainly an encouraging symptom that there is a newly awakened interest in the prayer life in all its phases. In regard to meditation and mental prayer in particular there are signs of a fresh zest. Now it is here, in the blessed art of quiet communion with God, that souls most need guidance. Father Trevelyan offers a valuable contribution to this end. For there is no book more worthy of solid reflection, as there is none more likely to give illumination in the conditions of to-day, than the Apocalypse.

As I read through the manuscript, one text recurred to my mind constantly—'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, yea and for ever.' That is the underlying theme of the book. Changes unanticipated and wide-reaching lie ahead. But in and through all changes the Lord, Christ, abides: He is Lord of all changes, circumstances, and conditions: He is the one hope of mankind.

I pray that this book may be widely used: it will enable those who make its contents the material for mental prayer 'to dig deep into the soil of the mind' and to bring forth the fruits of calm trust and hope which interior communion with God secures.

PRIORY OF THE RESURRECTION,
PADDINGTON, W.2.

*(By very kind permission of the writer of this Hymn, written on the
Isle of Patmos.)*

HYMN FOR ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

WORD of the Father, God of God, begotten
From the beginning, help us with Thy favour,
Chanting the praises of the great Apostle,
John Thy beloved.

'Eyes had not seen Him, nor had hands Him handled,
Deity hidden, dwelling in the Heavens,
Till that the unseen Image of the Father
Took Flesh of Mary.

Then I, John, saw Him; then I, John, Him handled;
Then my ears heard Him; when that He the unseen
Father's own Image, visibly amongst us,
Dwelt in His Manhood.

This is my witness. Love Him, little children,
Who for our blindness, and for our Salvation,
Was manifested; showing us the Father,
One in His Substance.'

For this thy record, Holy John, we bless thee,
And we beseech thee, as to-day thou standest
In the Lamb's Presence, midst the harps and incense,
Plead for thy children.

Lord God Almighty, Father, Son, and Spirit,
Whom the Four Creatures praise and thank and honour,
God the Thrice-Holy, humbly we adore Thee,
Lifting our voices. Amen.

A. R.

PATMOS. 1933.

UPON OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE APOCALYPSE

THE last book of the Bible, originally written in the Greek language, is called either by the original Greek term, 'The Apocalypse', or by a word derived from the Latin, 'The Revelation'. Both words have a similar meaning, which we may think of as 'the dispersal of the mental and spiritual mist which to a great extent makes us unable to realize God and His work amongst and in us'.

The book, accepted by the Church as an integral part of the word of God to man, is clearly meant to be understood. 'What thou seest write in a book, and send it to the seven Churches': 'I Jesus have sent mine Angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches'. A special blessing is promised to those who study and follow out in their lives the knowledge of God's purpose for His creation, which is to be found in it.

As the 'Acts of the Apostles' carries out into the practical institutional life of the Church the knowledge of our Lord's manifestation through the Gospel story, so, standing at the end of the Bible, the Apocalypse carries out the whole of God's revelation of Himself and His relation to the world into the generation in which we live, between the first Whitsunday and the end of this present earthly scene. It tells us of 'the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter'.

The Apocalypse sums up the message of the Bible from Genesis to Jude. Its symbolic expressions and visions constantly have as their background similar words and visions in the writings of the Prophets of the Old Covenant, or bring to light the spiritual meaning of the worship of the Israelite Church in its purest form—that of the time when the Tabernacle of God accompanied them in their wanderings. The mind of the Seer had pondered again and again over the story of the people of God before and after the Incarnation. Naturally the visions suggested to him are formed on what he had so constantly in mind, whether it be the tradition of the Old Covenant or the recollection of our Lord's life and teaching. We cannot doubt, for instance, that the vision of 'the Tree of Life' in the first five verses of the last chapter is moulded in his mind on the tradition of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden; or that the visions of judgement recall and follow very closely our Lord's teaching on the last days of the world. A Reference Bible shows constant references to the other Scriptures.

It is principally on this conviction that Dr. Milligan founded his wonderful writings on the Apocalypse, and it is his leading which is followed in the meditations of this present book. His books show the Apocalypse to be no mere prophecy of individual events or movements of human history, past, present, or to come, but rather a

manifestation of the great principles of God's working in the world through the living Christ, the Son of God, who is given to us by God to be our King and High Priest, standing for ever towards us on the manward side of God, and with us towards God on the Godward side of man; whose presence with us is invisible to the sight of human eyes, but is a most certain fact of life to those who rightly exercise their faith, hope, and love.

It is for the purpose of realizing such truth that we desire to follow out, not merely the comparatively few passages of the Apocalypse which are read in Church, but its meaning as a whole. We cannot doubt that it does present to us a consistent whole of meaning, when we see it set out under its seven sections.

Introduction—I. 1-8.

- (I) The vision of Jesus as we are to know Him now. 1. 9-20.
- (II) Jesus speaks through His servant John to His Church. II and III.
- (III) Through Jesus the whole creation is to be 'bound with gold chains about the feet of God'. IV and v.
- (IV) Judgements are manifested on earth against the sin of a godless and sinful world, while faithful servants of God are assured of their safety in the love and care of God. VI. 1—XVIII. 24.
- (V) The song of triumphal anticipation of glorious life in Christ. XIX. 1-10.
- (VI) The final contest and the victory of the Christ with and in His people. XIX. 11—XXII. 5.
- (VII) Our Lord's last messages to His Church. XXII. 6 to end.

In meditation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall find that the symbols used in the book are by no means used at random, but that they have throughout a similar meaning, so that we learn to attach a definite mystical value to them. We remember also that in all our use of human language to express spiritual things, we can only speak of them in symbolic terms. When we call God 'our Father', when we speak of our Lord as 'descending' and 'ascending', when we speak of our salvation through 'the Blood of Christ', and in many such phrases which we are accustomed to use, we are using a like symbolic language, taking the things of this earth as parables of the spiritual life.

We should certainly make use of the Revised Version of the New Testament for this book. One instance of its value in its fresh translation from the Greek is found in the mistake of the Authorized Version in translating two very different Greek words by the term 'beast'. In chapter IV and in other places the translation should be, as in the Revised Version, 'living creatures' (representing creation as God's work, apart from the idea of sin); in both versions the translation 'beast' in chapter XIII and elsewhere is rightly used, telling of the evil powers which lie behind the world's sin under the symbol of savage wild enemies of man.

KEY TO THE METHOD SUGGESTED FOR MEDITATION

IT is taken for granted that all who desire to meditate will certainly first pray that the Holy Spirit may be directing and guiding their minds into the true meaning of the subject suggested in the headings of each meditation.

The meditation itself is given under three heads:

- A. God is to be seen in the subject. We are led to thanks, praise, and adoration.
- B. We consider the subject as it bears on our life. This should lead to acts of petition, penitence, and such-like.
- C. We would set our heart, mind, and will in right reaction to the thoughts put into our mind, following them up with suitable acts of devotion.

The acts suggested at the end of each of these are but helps to the opening out of our whole self in giving ourselves to God, which 'is our reasonable service'.

A DEEP debt of gratitude is due to the late Dr. Milligan for his illuminating interpretations of the Apocalypse in his books. It is a matter of much regret that his books are not widely known.

Many thanks also to Fr. Seyzinger for his Foreword to this book, to Mr. Athelstan Riley, who has kindly permitted the printing here of the hymn written actually on the Isle of Patmos, the place of the Revelation, and to G. W. for two short poems for the introduction and before the last section.

SCHEME OF MEDITATIONS, SHOWING ALSO THE STRUCTURE OF THE APOCALYPSE

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THE INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I. I-8

'The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to shew unto His servants.'

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

'I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, the God' (as in our best Greek text), which is and which was and which COMETH, 'the Almighty.'

'Blessed be the Holy and Undivided Trinity.'

Blest be the God and Father of us all!

Love: Thou hast made us for Thyself alone.

Blest be the God and Saviour of us all!

Love: Thou hast saved us: still for us atone.

Blest be the God and Comforter of all!

Love: Thou hast sealed us: sanctify Thine own.

Blest be the Triune God, Who blesseth all!

Love: shall we know Thee e'en as we are known?

G. W.

1. THE 'REVELATION' AS A VERY SPECIAL GIFT OF GOD TO HIS CHURCH. I. 1-3.

Sometimes it is called the 'Apocalypse', which is the Greek word, meaning just the same as 'Revelation'—the drawing back of the veil which hides God and our Lord Jesus Christ from human sight.

A. Jesus is commissioned by the Father to make known to our faith the purpose of God in His governance of the world during this generation, between the Incarnation and the end of time. In verse 19 we are told more fully that it deals with 'the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter'. An Angel representing our Lord is to take charge of the visions which are to be shown to us through His servant John (1).

God has given us the grace of faith, without active use of which we cannot grasp high spiritual truths. So we begin with an act of faith—'I believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world: I believe in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind: I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.'

B. St. John did his part in recording the visions given to him; witnessing to the Incarnate Son of God as God's appointed Ruler and Judge of His Church and of the world, and as the Word of God to man (2).

Remember strongly that Jesus, risen from the dead and ascended into the full presence of God, though unseen to human sight, makes Himself known to our faith as being present with His Church on earth for all time. He is amongst us to make us children of God and to train us for our place in His heaven—'If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto myself; that, where I am, there ye may be also.' 'Lord, open the windows and doors of my heart, my mind, and my soul, that I may behold the glorious unveiling of Thyself.'

C. St. John tells us that a special blessing will come to those who read and hear faithfully that which is written in the book, and try to live in accordance with that which is revealed in it (3).

Jesus says to His followers, 'Apart from me ye can do nothing'. Consider in your faith what kind of people we are. St. Paul puts it shortly, 'Not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me'. Surely that should produce in us the banishment of all self-seeking, the giving of ourselves in all things to do the will of God, as shown in the character of Jesus.

'O Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, help us this day and every day to know Thee more clearly, to love Thee more dearly, to follow Thee more nearly; for Thine own sake.'

2. THE SEER PRONOUNCES THE BLESSING OF GOD THE MOST HOLY TRINITY UPON THE CHURCH. I. 4-6.

The numbers of the book are not mere numbers; they are used to express the spiritual character of persons and societies. '7' expresses the character of the whole Church as working in covenant with God. The '3' of God is added to the '4' of human life. It has the idea of unity in diversity. So 'the 7 Churches' is to be taken to mean the Church of all time in its manifold manifestations.

A. God's blessing confers 'grace' of God working in and through us, and the 'peace' of heart and mind which belong to those who give themselves to God's service. The Father is the eternal 'I AM', 'WAS' manifested in the past, and ever 'COMETH' to those who seek Him. The One Holy Spirit manifested in many ways ('7') is present with the Church, while ever in full vision of the Throne. Jesus, the Son of God, ever bears witness to God on earth, being the first amongst men to be raised from the dead into the new Life of our humanity, which God purposes for us all who believe on Him. He is appointed as Ruler of the influences which govern the minds of men on earth (4-5a).

'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.'

B. We hear a glorious act of praise to Jesus, who, moved by perfect love, made the Atonement for our sins, which looses us from their hold upon us, offering His life to bear to the full the penalty of our sins: moreover, He made us to be a true kingdom of God upon earth, and set us apart to share in His service as priests with Him in and for the world. All true glory and dominion is found in Him to whom we ascribe it (5a, 6).

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.'

C. All this blessing, grace, and peace can rest only upon those who live in the Light of God the ever-blessed Trinity, giving themselves wholly to God through Christ, who is ever to them 'a lantern unto our feet and a light unto our paths' through life. We do belong to God: it is for us to give our free personality to live and work with Him.

'O my God, I am not my own, but Thine. Take me for Thy own and make me in all things to do Thy holy will. O my God, I want to give myself to Thee for joy or for sorrow, for sickness or for health, for life or for death, for time and for eternity. Make me and keep me Thine for Jesus Christ's sake.'

3. THE REVELATION OF TRUTH IS ALSO NECESSARILY A REVELATION OF JUDGEMENT. I. 7.

The book tells of the revelation of God through Christ, pronouncing God's blessing on all who by faith can welcome it: but we have the free use of our will to refuse it. To those who will not give themselves to God in answer to His call the revelation of His truth and love must result in their condemnation.

A. 'Clouds' are mentioned often in special connexion with our Lord manifested as the Judge of the world. Men have constantly caused agony to our Lord, who took upon Himself the burden of our sins. All mankind shall finally be unable to shield themselves from the Light which utterly condemns the darkness of sin, even though through life they have held a veil between themselves and God. They who would take no share with our Lord in His mourning for sin ('the tribes of the earth') will mourn for the result of their own sin.

Welcome our Lord and Saviour as our Judge—'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son, of the Father. When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.'

B. Judgement for sin is constantly seen in the world now. The keeping of God's laws for our bodily life, for the moral well-being of our souls, for our spirit by which we may be in touch with God, may not be neglected without most serious results. Jesus has told us of the glorious results of a life given, as our lives must be, to God. But in the Gospel and in this book He gives us the most solemn warnings of the punishments of godlessness and sin.

Pray for the world—'Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us.'

C. It is our common life of day by day that is constantly the material of our judgement for reward or condemnation. The final judgement will be the consummation of the changes taking place here and now in our character.

'Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God: let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.'

4. JESUS IS GOD'S WORD TO MAN, AND IS OF THE DIVINE TRINITY.
I. 8.

'God may have other words for other worlds; but for this world the Word of God is Christ.'

A. Jesus is the expression of God's whole message to man ('A' and 'O' are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet). St. John tells in his Gospel of Jesus as the Eternal Word (1. 1) and then of His work in Creation (2, 3). 'In the beginning was the Word' and 'The same was in the beginning with God.' He goes on in verse 14 to tell the glorious mystery of the Incarnation, 'The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us'.

'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son, of the Father. When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.'

B. This is the belief which the Church of all the ages has taught us to take hold of. Belief in us is to lead to the faith which is to dominate all our lives, for we are 'taken captive by the Lord's Servant to the will of God'. Belief is not enough, except as a starting-point—'The devils also believe and tremble'. By faith we present our heart, mind, and will to the revelation of God, praying to God the Holy Ghost to lead us into all the truth, to bring home to us our true relation to God and His Christ.

'The Catholic Faith is this, that we worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.'

'The right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.'

'Lord, increase our faith.'

C. So we are prepared to find in this book an ever-fresh revelation of our Lord as God's full expression of Himself to man. In this faith we are to give ourselves to God through Him by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May it become more and more true in us that we are 'taken captive' in the thoughts, words, and deeds of our daily life 'to the will of God'.

'Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.'

'Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law, Yea I shall keep it with my whole Heart.'

SECTION I

CHAPTER I. 9-20

*The Vision of Jesus as we are to know
Him amongst us now.*

'Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.'

5. JESUS IS SHOWN IN VISION AS UNITING HEAVEN AND EARTH IN ONE IN HIS OWN PERSONALITY. I. 9-20.

St. John, an exile for the Faith in Christ, has, by the grace of God the Holy Ghost, his heart and mind opened to receive the great vision of the Christ. A trumpet-voice is heard, like that which called Moses up into Mount Sinai to behold the vision of God. He is bidden to record his visions for the advancement of the whole Church. In dreams things are seen which do not tally with each other: it is so in these visions: but each part represents some spiritual fact, and the spiritual facts form a consistent whole (9-11).

A. The 'seven golden lampstands' represent the Church of Christ in its devotional life before God, recalling the lampstand in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Jesus, in His likeness as Man, is seen moving in the midst of His people. He has the garment of priesthood and the golden girdle of royal authority (12, 13). His rule on earth is marked by the light of perfect wisdom and holiness. His glance is like that which brought St. Peter to penitence in the hall of Caiaphas (14). His feet tell of His walking amongst us, as in the Blessed Sacrament, in human substance transformed by Divine Being. His voice tells out the manifold teachings of the Holy Spirit (15). He is equipped for His work amongst us: He upholds His Church in its character as witness to the world ('seven stars'); He witnesses by His word (cf. Heb. iv. 12); His face shines with a fuller glory than that of Moses after communion with God on Sinai (16).

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

B. Jesus proclaims that now and always He is the Christ revealed in the Gospel story, who died upon the Cross, but, being raised from the dead, lives for evermore as God and Man in One Person. Apart from the revelation of Jesus death can only be known as a plunge into an uncharted world, and that unseen world a world of darkness. But Jesus has brought life and immortality to light in His work, and makes death to be to us a glorious gate into the fullness of Life eternal (17-20).

'My God, I hope in Thee for grace and for glory, because of Thy promises, Thy mercy, and Thy power.'

C. Give yourself to be a most loyal disciple of Jesus in His example and teaching so clearly handed down to us.

'Jesu, my Lord, I Thee adore; O make me love Thee more and more.'

SECTION II

CHAPTERS II and III

Jesus speaks through His servant John to His Church.

‘These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.’

‘These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and lived again.’

‘These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword.’

‘These things saith the Son of God.’

6. JESUS BIDS THE SEER TO ASSURE THE CHURCH OF HIS INTIMATE CONCERN IN ITS WELFARE, AS ITS RULER. II and III.

The first three Churches represent the Church standing for the Faith against the pressure of the world in which its life is set. They are not faultless, but have really witnessed to God and His Christ.

A. The Angels of the Churches represent our Lord in His Church; Jesus speaks to the Church in its spiritual aspect. He has Divine authority over it; He is with it in its devotional life, for He 'walks' in the midst of it (II. 1).

Make a joyful act of praise for the Church as the 'Body of Christ', one in Christ on earth and in the unseen—'I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.' 'O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

B. Jesus has intimate knowledge of His Church in its contest against sin and false teaching, and rejoices when it stands firm in its faith, that He may be glorified in it (2, 3).

Consider how grievously the Church is affected by worldly considerations, as in regard to such things as the sanctity of Christian marriage. Make an act of penitence for the Church—'O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy Name: . . . O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not; for Thine own sake, O my God, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy Name' (Dan. ix).

C. Jesus praises the Church in Ephesus, but knows that it has lost its first enthusiasm. If this cannot be regained, through repentance, He must Himself show His hand. Yet still He praises where He can. The Church has stood firm against the common immorality of the world around. ('Nicolaitans' seems to be a rough translation from Hebrew to Greek of 'Balaamites'; for Balaam led the Israelite Church into idolatry and fornication. Numb. xxxi. 16.) (4-6.) The Church must listen in to the message of our Lord's words, which are brought home by the Holy Spirit. The individual is reminded that he himself must contribute his best to the truth of the whole Church, by conquering the temptations which beset him. His reward is sure—Jesus, the Bread of Life to sustain his life in the garden of God (7).

Pray with all earnestness, 'Thy kingdom come', longing that the Christ may be truly manifested in His Church, here and now and to the end.

7. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA. II. 8-11.

The Church in Smyrna, in the midst of persecution and martyrdom, is not to fear, but gladly to accept the spirit of the Cross, that they may be saved from the spiritual death which results from sin.

A. Jesus is seen as the foundation into which all human life from beginning to end is to be built. That He may fulfil this purpose of God, He has passed through suffering unto death and been raised to man's true life (8).

Give your meed of praise to Jesus for His facing of the greatest of all tribulation, and His calling us to share with Him in the spirit of the Cross. 'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.'

B. Jesus sees a rich spiritual life in this Church, far outweighing the tribulation which has come to them through their faith. They were persecuted by Jews, who, in the name of religion, but really at the instigation of Satan, set themselves against Him and His people. God puts limits on their suffering. ('10' implies suffering great from the earthly point of view, but limited by God.) Dying as martyrs for their Faith, or in the daily death to sin, Jesus will award to them the crown of victory, the fullness of Life eternal with God (9, 10).

'Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors by the example of Thy first martyr St. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God to succour all those who suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate.'

C. We would listen to the message, and hope to be glad to suffer for the truth in Christ, in small things of daily life, and at all times when our Lord calls us to share in His spirit of the Cross, which is the carrying out of love to God and others beyond the point where it becomes irksome, difficult, or painful (11).

In this spirit we are to 'overcome' all that holds us back in the great lesson of life, to learn love. In such things we have the opportunity to choose spiritual life or spiritual death.

'May our love of life never make us shrink from death; may we never shrink back, nor act a coward's part when Thou dost call us to work or suffer for Thee.'

8. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM. II. 12-17.

Our Lord finds a mystery of evil in this city, ascribing it to Satan as enthroned there. The mystery cult may have fostered fornication in the ordinary sense; but at any rate it involved the spiritual fornication in the sense in which it is used later in the book for departure from God. Members of the Church have been led away by it.

A. From our Lord comes the 'sword' of true witness to God, which He brings. It is the word of Life to faithful souls, the word of spiritual death to those who refuse it (12). ('2' in the book seems constantly to express the idea of witness.) 'For this world the word of God is Christ.'

Speak to our Lord as in the words of St. Thomas, giving yourself through life to follow His example and teaching—'My Lord and my God.'

B. The Church as a whole has held to the faith as taught by Jesus, and is commended. But some of its members have given way to the false teaching, and have been led away from true faith in Christ (13-15).

Consider how many attractive false doctrines—some of them claiming to be Christian—are presented to us in the present time. Against all such we are to hold strictly to the Faith, as presented to us in the ministry, creeds, and sacraments of the Church Catholic, built up through the Christian age on our Lord's example and teaching.

'O my God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.'

C. The Church is bidden to repent for the sin of those of its members who have been led away from Christ. If we, who hold to the Faith, fail to bear witness against their 'fornication' in adhering to doctrines which run counter to the Faith, Jesus Himself will take up the contest, and we shall have lost our great opportunity of witnessing for Him in our generation (16). We are to believe that God the Holy Ghost, working through the ages in the Church, has led and will always lead those who trust in God through Christ into all the truth. The reward of faithful witness is very great—the untold blessing of the sacramental gift in far higher measure than is yet known to us, and the precious stone of holiness, as the consummation of a life wholly given to God through Christ (17).

'Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only true God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

9. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA. II. 18-29.

The Churches of the last four Epistles have felt very great pressure from the world. Three of them have sinned grievously, but Philadelphia has stood firm for Christ. The spiritual danger of the Nicolaitan heresy was known in Ephesus, given way to by some Church members in Pergamum, but the Thyatiran Church has, with some exceptions, taken it into most intimate union with itself.

A. To this Church our Lord is shown as 'the Son of God', with all the authority implied. His eyes shine with the love, which tests the souls of men. He walks amongst us as Man, through whom Divine Light shines (18).

Praise God for His gift of Jesus to this world—'God is Love; thanks be to God.'

B. The Church is praised for its growth in grace and work for Christ. But it has failed in its witness to Christ in taking heresy to close union with itself. Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, led the Israelites into idolatry, fornication in spiritual matters. The Church has taken her as 'thy wife', instead of casting her out. The heretics and those they have drawn into disloyalty to Christ will have earned spiritual death and the bed of tribulation unless they repent and give up their sin (19-23).

'Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy: and because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

C. The remnant of the Church which has remained faithful to her Lord will suffer on behalf of the Church, but are bidden to hold fast to their glorious faith through all the trouble. Conquering in Christ and eager to carry out His works for man, they will themselves be endowed with His authority and sharing in His judgements upon sin—the authority which belongs to Him as the Son of God. They will be reflecting the Light of Jesus, who shines in their hearts as 'the Morning Star of new Life in Man'. The Son of God has spoken to us: we must listen in to Him and obey (24-9).

Review your knowledge of the Christ manifested to us in the Holy Scriptures and in the Sacraments and the Church's worship. Do you seek diligently to know our Lord better through prayer and meditation? Pray—

'Christ, whose glory fills the skies, Christ, the true, the only Light, Sun of Righteousness, arise, Triumph o'er the shades of night; Dayspring from on high be near; Daystar, in my heart appear.'

10. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS. III. 1-6.

The world greatly admired this Church's fine display of worship, and its many adherents. But true piety has declined; the true character of life in Christ has not been shown to the world.

A. To such a Church Jesus presents Himself as possessor of the Holy Spirit, the one Spirit of God in His divers manifestations, and of the Church, as His witness to the world, which should live and move by the grace of the same Spirit (1a).

Rejoice in the utterly binding relation of the Church and its members to Jesus through His Spirit. This is that which St. John loves to know as 'Life eternal', and St. Paul calls 'the Life which is Life indeed'.

'God made Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all' (fulfilleth all things in all persons).

B. The world spoke of the Church in Sardis as an essentially living Church; our Lord sees it as spiritually dead. They must take to heart and mind the wonder of the spiritual Life they have received and their experience of it; they must repent. If not our Lord will show Himself in judgements amongst them (1b-3).

So we look back and glorify God for His marvellous grace received in our life through the Holy Spirit in the Church; consider with deep thankfulness the times in which it has been most real to us, when we have really shown the Christ in the world; repent deeply for failure of ourselves and the Church to bear witness to Christ.

'If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be feared.'

C. The reward of the remnant, who for themselves and the Church choose a Life hid with Christ in God from valuing earthly praise, is great. They shall attain holiness; be inscribed in the roll of the citizens of the kingdom of God; Jesus claims them as worthy (4-6).

We would make a great desire that we may be worthy of our calling. 'O God, we beseech Thee, count us worthy of our calling; and fulfill every desire of goodness and every work of faith with power; that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in Him; according to the grace of our God and the same our Lord Jesus Christ.'

11. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA. III. 7-13.

This Church has stood firm for Christ in the midst of temptation and persecution. It incurs no reproof.

A. To such a Church Jesus is shown as the example of the complete consecration of human life to God's service; of the true object of such life; as ready and eager to call souls of men into the glorious kingdom of God (cf. Isa. xxii. 22) (7).

Adore the Lord Jesus with such thought in mind—

‘Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son, of the Father.

When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.’

B. In humble simplicity of mind the Church in Philadelphia, keeping the commands of Jesus, and bearing witness to Him, has entered through the door of sacramental grace into the kingdom of heaven which Jesus has brought to us. By the example of their faithfulness some of the Jews who had falsely claimed to be acting as God's children in persecution of Christ in His members will be converted and drawn into the worship of the Church. The faithful are assured that, in the temptations which must come throughout the whole inhabited world to test the worldly deniers of God and His love, our Lord will be with His faithful children, and they will find ‘the peace which passes understanding’. (‘They that dwell on the earth’ means the godless and worldly.) (8-10.)

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit (those who choose the riches of Christ rather than any earthly goods), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

‘Help me, Lord Jesus, to take up my Cross daily, and to deny myself; that, forsaking the empty pleasures of the world, I may be Thy disciple in truth.’

C. Our Lord holds out great promises to encourage us to persevere in the way of Life. He will manifest Himself to His people who call upon Him, and that speedily. They have already the ‘crown’ of a life kept free from sin; they must use all effort to keep it. They may be more than living stones in the Temple of God, even pillars of support and beauty. Each one will share in the full revelation of God, in the richness of His perfected Church, in the full knowledge of what Jesus means to man. But we must listen and obey (11-13).

‘May I realize that the door is now open into the heavens, and may I enter in and dwell there.’

12. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICAEA. III. 14-22.

Again and again in the later part of the book we are shown how the worst enemy of the faith in Christ is a profession of Christianity without Christian living. It was prominent in the Church of Laodicaea.

A. We say 'Amen' as our hearty assent to the prayers of the Church. Jesus is the Amen of man to the revelation of the will of God. He ever witnesses to God, being Himself the soul of all creation (14).

Praise God with Him—'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created.'

B. There is more hope for an active enemy of the Faith than for a 'lukewarm' believer, whom our Lord must cast out of His Body, the Church. The Laodicean Church has found its good in earthly wealth and prosperity. It must seek the true riches of holy character and dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance (15-18).

'Lord, take from me conventional religion, self-consciousness, sluggishness of will, and all that keeps me back from the heavenly vision.'

C. It is in love that Jesus rebukes and chastens, calling us to penitence for our lack of zeal in His service. He knocks at the door of our heart, to call us to such communion with Him as that with His first disciples on Maundy Thursday. But I must open the door of my heart to Him. It is to those still faithful in the midst of a lukewarm profession of the Faith by very many that our Lord gives a wonderful promise, that they will share with Him in His triumphant royalty, who is for ever Man in the full glory of His Godhead. And again, as in every Epistle, we are reminded that no one can be one with Him without diligent effort to hear and obey all that He has revealed to us of God and ourselves (19-21).

Repent deeply of all past lukewarmness in bearing witness to Jesus in our lives, and especially for thoughts, acts, and deeds in which we have caused others to sin, or led them wrong.

'Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us.'

'Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell. Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end.'

SECTION III

CHAPTERS IV and V

*Through Jesus the whole creation is to be
'bound with gold chains about the feet
of God'.*

'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created.'

'Unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.'

13. THE VISION OF GOD. IV. 1-4.

In his Gospel (II. 12-IV. 54) St. John shows Jesus first going out to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee to call the world for God: so in Rev. IV and V we see the vision of the whole Creation as He would bind it to God.

A. Moses was called up to God on Mount Sinai: St. John is called to a great vision of God: we are called to share in his experience. The Holy Spirit who inspired St. John will guide us in it to the Throne of God the Holy Trinity (1, 2).

‘Lord, open the windows and doors of my heart, my mind, and my soul, that I may behold the glorious unveiling of Thyself.’

‘Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire and lighten with celestial fire.’

‘We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.’

B. St. John notes the bright, flashing light (‘jasper’) of holiness—God’s perfect fulfilment of all possibility of good—and the ‘sardius’ red of perfect love for man. As he looks farther, he sees a spiritual rainbow, the character of Christ on the Throne reflected in His people: it is marked with the ‘emerald’ character of life, for it is seen in living persons (3).

‘We all with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.’

‘Lord, hide not Thyself from me amid the common surroundings of my daily life.’

C. In the Apse, as it were of a great eastern cathedral, we see our Lord enthroned behind the Altar, facing the congregation: on each side of the Apse are thrones on which His faithful Church is seated. The ‘twenty-four Elders’, who represent His Church, share our Lord’s priesthood, clothed, like Him, in the priestly robe and crowned by His victories in them (4).

Each of us is called to share in Christ’s glory in His Church, as a priesthood for the world, in unceasing joy of worship and prayer. Pray that we may carry out the ideal—‘Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous Light.’ ‘In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.’

‘Enter Thou, my Light, and illuminate my darkness.’

14. THE IDEAL OF WORSHIP OF ALL CREATION, WHICH WILL SOMETIME BE FULFILLED. IV. 5-11.

Recall the scene of 1-4, God shown by the symbol of heavenly Light. We are now to see all Nature, including mankind, adoring God.

A. In the midst of the revelation of God we are reminded by scriptural symbols of judgement that we are responsible, as His Creation, for giving due service to Him in all our life: but with the warning we are shown God the Holy Ghost, the One Holy Spirit in His manifold work in us (5).

We speak to Jesus—'We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.' Knowing the importance of our life day by day, we realize the need of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all the truth—'I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life.'

B. In the Creation is seen a lion-like power given by God; the spirit of giving itself in sacrifice to God, symbolized in the bull-calf of sacrifice; the character of man as the interpreter of Creation; the far-seeing vision of the eagle. The 'wings' tell of active service of witness to God in our lives; the Holy Spirit is in it ('eyes')—for 'the Spirit of God filleth the world'. So Nature will be found giving its unceasing tribute of praise to its Creator (6-8).

'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.'

C. The Church of the faithful, the priest of Creation, takes up the song of worship, fully sharing in the joy of all Nature (9-11).

'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power' (God's gifts to man, which man finds in himself that he may know them in God): 'for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created' (they were in God's eternal purpose, and manifested in His creation of the world).

15. THE WHOLE CREATION WORSHIPS GOD AND THE LAMB, BEING REDEEMED FROM SIN. V. 1-10.

The groundwork of the fresh scene is the same as the vision of God as Creator in chapter IV: but now the thought of sin which has held the world down is merged in thought of the glory of Redemption (v). Jesus as the accepted offering for sin and Head of the kingdom of God can receive and interpret the Book of God's purpose for the world. (1-7.)

A. On the hand of God is seen the Book in which God's purpose is fully disclosed, and is reserved by the Holy Spirit ('sealed, &c.') for the Christ to receive and open (1-4).

Praise God for His will to reveal Himself to man—'O come hither and behold the works of God: how wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men.'

B. The Church of God ('the Elders') knows Jesus as Master in the kingdom of praise ('Judah' means praise); and as the spiritual ancestor of God's purpose shown in the Israelite Church. He has now overcome sin, and can receive and interpret God's purpose. He is seen as the perfect 'Lamb' of offering; He takes His stand as our High Priest in the full presence of God, and as one with man in God's creation. He has 'horns' of power shown in divers ways, and the fullness of the One Holy Spirit in His divers operations. He receives the Book from God (5-7).

'O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.'

C. The Creation, with the Church to give full expression to its praise, offers the harmony of its life ('harps') with the prayer of God's people to the Lamb, through whom we have become a kingdom of God and priests for Creation (8-10).

As members of Christ we share in His priesthood for the Creation, of which we are a part: we can make the voice of Nature articulate before God.

'Worthy art Thou to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with Thy Blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.'

16. A CRESCENDO OF PRAISE TO GOD AND TO JESUS AS THE LAMB OF GOD, THE CONQUEROR OF SIN BY THE OFFERING OF HIMSELF, FROM THE WHOLE CREATION, INCLUDING THE HOLY ANGELS. V. 11-14.

The Creation, with its priesthood the Church, has offered its meed of glory to the Lamb as its Redeemer. Their volume of praise is now swelled by the holy Angels, who are deeply interested in the earthly scene, and who serve God in His Creation.

A. In the vision of chapter IV we do not hear of the Angels. But they too, though they themselves have no need of redemption, were, no doubt, eagerly looking forward to the fulfilment of God's purpose for man. So when the Creation and the Church celebrate that fulfilment, they join their song of joy with ours. Creation is not only around, but also in the midst of the Throne; for Jesus is both God and Man: the Angels are around us and around the Throne. From man's point of view they are a great company ('10' is the number of an earthly perfection); but also God's completed purpose is seen in them ('1,000'): God sees in them a perfectness beyond human thought ('thousands of thousands') (11).

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

B. The Angels now celebrate the glory of God in Jesus, conqueror of sin and Lord of righteousness: they make their sevenfold act of praise as being in covenant with God. Then again the whole Creation, including man and the Angels, lifts up its voice in heavenly praise, ascribing to God the Holy Trinity and to the Lamb all the good gifts with which God endows His Creation (12, 13).

'Unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.'

C. The Church of God has led the triumphal song: now the Creation as such makes its heartfelt response of assent: and the heart of the Church is too full for words; it can but prostrate itself in the rapture of worship (14).

'With Angels and Archangels, and with the whole company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.'

'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'



SECTION IV

CHAPTERS VI. I TO XVIII. 24

Judgements are manifested on earth against the sin of a godless and sinful world, while faithful servants of God are assured of their safety in the love and care of God.

‘I saw, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto Him a crown: and He came forth conquering and to conquer.’

‘These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple.’ . . . ‘The Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall be their Shepherd.’

‘The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever.’

‘I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud I saw one sitting like unto a son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.’

17. THE CREATION CALLS UPON OUR LORD TO VINDICATE THE LOVING PURPOSE OF GOD AGAINST THE SIN WHICH DEGRADES THE WORLD. VI.

The great revelation of God's most high calling for His Creation has been shown in the last two chapters. In face of that calling man is responsible for following out the example and teaching of Jesus in daily life. Creation, which includes man, calls for the vindication of God's love on those who refuse its demands. (Judgement of the Seven Seals—VI and VIII. 3-5: the first four Seals, VI. 1-8). (Each 'opening' is just a symbol of further disclosure of God's purpose.)

A. The Creation, sensitive to the fact that sin has degraded man from his high calling, represented by the Living Creature of lion-like majesty, calls to our Lord to take up His great power and reign. In answer our Lord is seen in Person going out to claim the world for God by His example and teaching. He has the crown of victory won. His word goes out into the hearts of men, as one whose arrows are very sharp (1, 2).

Praise Jesus as Conqueror and pray for His victory—'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride on prosperously, Because of truth, meekness, and righteousness: And Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp; The peoples fall under Thee; They are in the heart of the King's enemies.' (Ps. 45, O.T. Revised Version.)

B. In the next three Seals our Lord's authority is represented by riders who proclaim earthly judgements on a world which refuses God. Creation in character of an offering to God (the bull-calf of sacrifice) calls.

(a) A world which refuses the sacrifice of the Christ will find human passions bringing wars and rumours of wars, in which men 'sacrifice' one another. They have rejected the great sword, that of peace on earth through Christ (3, 4).

(b) Refusing our Lord's teaching about God's love in providing for all the needs of those who trust in Him, men find the judgement of famine. The faithful share in the scarcity, but such things as they need for service of God are preserved to them. For this the creation, as seen in the man-like character of the third Living Creature, calls (5, 6).

'Father, glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee.'

C. Creation in character of the far-seeing eagle realizes the punishment that must come for sin. The world refuses Him who 'has the keys of Death and of Hades', who has brought Life and Immortality to light. This sums up the first Seals and tells of earthly judgements (as marked by the prominence of the number '4') (7, 8).

I have shared in the sin which degrades the world—'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' 'Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us.'

18. THE GREAT BODY OF FAITHFUL SOULS, WHO LIVED BEFORE THE INCARNATION, CALL UPON GOD TO VINDICATE HIS LOVING PURPOSE FOR HIS CREATION AGAINST A GODLESS WORLD. VI. 9-11.

The call of Creation would not be complete without that of faithful souls who, without the direct personal example and teaching of the Christ, and without the sacramental grace which He brought to man, did yet give themselves wholly in answer to God's revelation of Himself in other ways, whether in life or in their martyrdoms. Remember that God's judgements are being continually enacted on earth in every age.

A. Contemplate such men as Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and countless others unknown, longing that God may show His hand against the godless world which refuses the love offered to them ('them that dwell on the earth' always in the Book means this). In life and in death they gave themselves to die to sin and to live to God. Maybe in the vision it is living blood that is seen, blood signifying lives given in harmony with the Blood of the Christ. St. John interprets it as souls of men departed in God (9, 10).

The Lord's Prayer is one that all can use, desiring that God may be glorified in His whole Creation: we will glorify God by praying most earnestly 'Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven'.

B. 'These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect' (Heb. xi. 39, 40). For this they wait in faith and patience; but even now God clothes them with His righteousness (11).

These faithful ones are to be as truly members of Christ and sharers in His glory as we are: the perfected Church is gathered from all the ages. We may also have the great hope that the many who now and in every age give themselves to God, without having known His Christ, will be given all that our Lord has received as gifts for men, and be found as children of God in Christ. We join with all these in hopeful prayer—'The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost.'

C. With them all we join in the prayer that God may indeed be glorified through Christ in the utter banishment of sin from His Creation.

'O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us.'

19. THE PRAYER OF GOD'S CREATION IS ANSWERED IN JUDGEMENTS CONTINUALLY SHOWN ON EARTH. VI. 12-17.

The symbolic words and phrases are similar throughout the Book, and are to be interpreted into their spiritual counterpart. God's judgements are described here through earthly figures, used in a similar way by the O.T. prophets.

A. (The grace of God which is refused by the godless world, is now seen to condemn it.) All mere earthly standards of social and individual life are upset; Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, no longer shines into souls of men who will not give themselves to God; the Church, which should receive light from the Christ, is itself darkened by souls that profess the Faith in unreality—their life-blood is not given in harmony with that of the Christ, but is spilt uselessly on earth; the example of saintly souls in God's Church is judged by earthly measures—brought down to earth; no heaven is in sight of the godless—they have lost their instinct of it; the seemingly strong institutions, which arise from the earth of independence of God and the tossing, restless sea of sin, can no longer hold their place as abiding places for the human soul (12-14).

Make an act of faith in God as Creator, Lord, and Master of the world—'Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created.'

B. The godless world, with its pledged followers, would fain find shelter from the vision of God in worldly interests. (So now we see States usurping the place of the Christ as Lord of souls of men.) The great institutions of the world cannot shelter us from the sight of God. In these earthly interests men would fain be submerged—for they have lost sight of the Christ and cannot find rest in Him, or in Him stand with confidence before God (15-17).

Make an act of deep sorrow for the sin of the world and for the nations which build up power apart from God—'By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension, Good Lord, deliver us.'

C. In such a world we are called, in faithful humility and love, to give ourselves to God through Christ: to conquer sin in ourselves and learn holiness: and so to bear witness in our lives to God and the Lamb.

'May we each fulfil the boundless purpose of the King, whatever it cost, and may we let in broad pathways for the light in the place where we dwell; and lift up all those who fall in the battle.'

20. TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD, BEING DEDICATED TO HIS SERVICE, WILL FIND PEACE AND SAFETY IN THE MIDST OF THE TROUBLES WHICH RESULT FROM SIN. VII.

In the first part of the vision (1-8) we see the great company of the faithful as they are known to God. The '144,000' tells of their character—the number of human life, '4', is multiplied into the '3' of the life of God, showing God dwelling in man; this '12' of union of man with God is multiplied on itself up to the end of time; this '144' is multiplied by the '1,000' representing God's perfected work in man. We meditate on 1-8.

A. The vision shows, as it were, a period of spiritual armistice, Angels of God's world holding back the daily contest of the faithful against the false deceits of evil doctrines ('winds'). In that silence we are called to see an Angel representative of Jesus, the 'sunrising' offered to man, exhibiting the mark of God for His true servants, which sets them apart for Godly service. (The Passover lamb was 'sealed' by the Priest to set it apart to be offered as a sacrifice to God. Jesus says of Himself, 'Him hath God the Father sealed'. An early name for our Confirmation as the complement of our Baptism is 'Sealing'.) The judgement of a godless world ('earth'), which is full of sin ('sea'), and that which grows out of them ('trees') is held back in the vision, that the full meaning of the sealing may be seen. It is in the thoughts of our heart and mind ('forehead') that the sealing takes effect (2, 3).

Praise God for His loving patience with us—'The Lord is full of compassion and mercy; long-suffering and of great goodness.'

B. God sees His redeemed children as united with Himself through Christ, the fruit of the ages of the world, now called to be perfected in His glorious service ('His servants shall do Him service'; cf. xxii. 3). This purpose of God for His Church was brought to view in the story of the Israelite Church, to be fulfilled in the Church Catholic. Each tribe of Israel and each part of the Christian Church has its contribution to make to the perfected body of the servants of God (4-8).

Ask God that we may know ourselves as 'called to be Jesus Christ's, beloved of God, called to be saints' (consecrated people). 'Make us to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.'

C. I am not my own; I am God's to do His will, being taken up into eternal Life in Christ; I desire to spend my life in such service of God.

'O my God, I am not my own, but Thine. Take me for Thy own, and make me in all things to do Thy holy will. O my God, I desire to give myself to Thee, for joy or for sorrow, for sickness or for health, for life or for death, for time and for eternity. Make me and keep me Thine for Jesus Christ's sake.'

21. WE SEE THE SAME GREAT COMPANY OF THE FAITHFUL AS IN THE PREVIOUS VERSES—BUT NOW FROM MAN'S POINT OF VIEW. VII. 9-17.

In their glory and happiness we are to see the boundless love of God for man brought to us by Jesus the Lamb of God in His perfect giving of Himself for conquest of sin and for holiness.

A. No man can number the great spiritual Host. They come out of every part of the world and from all the generations of the life of mankind to be numbered as members of God's '144,000'. They stand before God and man in the robe of their priesthood in Christ; they form a great procession, entering into the temple of God's presence, as in heart and mind they become more and more united with God; they offer deepest thanksgiving and praise, ascribing their salvation to God's loving purpose, revealed to us in the vision. The Angels, surrounding the great circle of God and His Creation, give a sevenfold ascription of praise; for they too have their covenant with God. They ascribe to God His manifold gifts of grace for His Creation, in which they have their place (9-12).

'I will magnify Thee, O God my King: I will praise Thy Name for ever and ever. Every day will I give thanks unto Thee: and praise Thy Name for ever and ever.'

B. Christ, through His Church, bids the Seer say who all this wondrous company are. He can only ask that Christ in His Church should tell of it. In answer we hear of its character as man can see it. With Christ they come out of the world so troubled by sin; they are loosed from sin by Him; they have attained the glory of holiness. The joyous love which fills them is seen in unceasing service of God; they dwell in Christ as God's tabernacle of meeting with man (13-15).

We pray to Jesus—'We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious Blood: make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.'

C. To them, now and for ever, the Christ is the source of all good. Their spiritual and bodily longings are fulfilled through Christ, whose Light brings to them no pain of heart, for they wholly rejoice in Him. For ever He is their Good Shepherd, who guides them into all the graces of the Holy Spirit in the Home where earthly grief finds no place (16, 17).

'The Lord is my Shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.

He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

He shall convert my soul: and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake.' (Ps. 23.)

22. THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD AND HIS FAITHFUL CALLS FOR THE VINDICATION OF GOD'S LOVE AGAINST A GODLESS WORLD.

VIII. 1-5.

The call of the first four 'Seals' of chapter VI came from the natural Creation, that of the fifth Seal from the souls of just men departed; the ideal of Prayer in its full power is now seen in the seventh Seal. It is closely connected with God's answer to such call in the judgement vision of 'the Seven Trumpets' which follows.

A. Our Lord's 'hour' of judgement is not yet come: it is being prepared for by the 'half an hour' of His unceasing intercession, in which He calls His faithful to take part. His dwelling with us in His Church as our High Priest is represented by the seven Angels; they are given the Trumpets which call to prayer (1, 2).

Make an act of joyful faith in Him who 'ever liveth to make intercession for us'. 'Lord, teach us to pray.'

B. This Angel represents our Lord as Intercessor. His is the perfect Prayer which makes our prayer effective. He offers our prayer with His own. The incense is the symbol of prayer presented before God (cf. v. 8) (3, 4).

Unite yourself in spirit with the whole company of the faithful on earth and in the unseen heavenly places. Pray for the conquest of sin in the conversion of sinners—'Almighty God, we pray Thee for all such as sin against Thee and neglect to serve Thee, that Thou wouldest bestow upon them true contrition and an earnest desire to devote themselves to Thy holy service; through Jesus Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.'

C. The effect of such true prayer on earth is seen in souls of men. There is the warning thunder of God's denunciation of sin, the voices of the Holy Spirit speaking in the inmost heart, the lightning strokes of conviction through our Lord's teaching and example: there follows an upsetting of all merely earthly standards of conduct (5).

Boldly commit yourself to the following of our Lord—'O Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, help us this day and every day to know Thee more clearly, to love Thee more dearly, to follow Thee more nearly; for Thine own sake.'

'Lord, teach us to pray.'

23. JUDGEMENT ON THE SOULS OF THE GODLESS AND SINFUL. VIII. 6-13, IX and XI. 14-19.

Where God manifests Himself, judgement is always going on, as we form day by day the character which will be accepted or rejected in final judgement. Meditate on VIII. 6-12.

A. The vision shows judgements which take place now. God's grace should be a gentle rain, nourishing spiritual growth, a fire of love which cleanses and inspires. They who refuse it find it as destructive hail and fire which scorches souls. Such souls are seen in vision as blood—life not offered with the Blood of Christ, but life uselessly sacrificed for self-pleasing. The godless 'earth' and the institutions growing out of it, and the good which God planted in human hearts are scorched up, for they are held apart from the grace of God. The 'third' shows, by the number '3' of God, that the Judgement is that of God (6, 7). The world in its aspect as a 'sea' of sin has accepted the ideas of the godless earth, and this keeps it back from repentance and from God, and becomes in itself a cause of judgement, even to souls which received Life in their baptism, but have given way to the world, as also to all that lives on the sin of the world (8, 9).

Jesus said, 'Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one'. Praise Him—'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'

B. We are meant to guide our lives by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by rivers and springs of water. The godless world is deceived by false and worldly doctrines, poisoned by the coming to earth of Satan, the fallen star. Souls of men die through these (10, 11).

Throw yourself strongly upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is given to lead us into all the truth. 'God, who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort.'

C. Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life'. But through the sin of the world the Light of Jesus and His Church, which should receive Light from Him, as the moon from the sun, is grievously obscured. Many refuse the love of God and His Christ (12).

'Lord Jesus, enter Thou, my Light, and illuminate my darkness'—'Thou hast said, I am the Light of the world.'

**24. GOD AND HIS HOSTS BRING TO EARTH HOLINESS FOR MANKIND :
THE HOSTS OF SATAN BRING TEMPTATION TO SIN. VIII. 13 and IX.**

The eagle-vision of God's Creation is sensitive to the inevitable judgments of God against sin (13).

A. Satan, banished from the company of heaven, is allowed to tempt men : through our Lord's victory he was conquered, but can still loose his hordes of evil spirits as if from a great locked well. They darken the moral life of the world, so that Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, is veiled from the heart of many. As scorpions sting with their tails, so, as they pass by, they sting souls with temptation. They may not disfigure the great principles of truth and virtue, which God has planted in our nature, but can only get hold of souls which refuse the loving purpose of God. Even these they cannot doom to hell, over which God alone has power, but God allows them to tempt and mislead the godless for a time of trial on earth signified by the number '5'. Those who give way to temptation lightly find themselves in a state worse than death, for it is a deadly disease of the soul, a living death (IX. 1-6). The vision changes : the same host is seen like an inrush of cavalry—horses with crowns of seeming victory, working through evil men, tempting to evil softness, but devouring souls. No mere human efforts can pierce their armour—God must conquer in us. The leader is called Destruction or the Destroyer, as our Lord is Salvation and Saviour (7-12).

'From all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, Good Lord deliver us.'

B. The hosts of evil attack those who call themselves by the Name of Christ, but do not follow Him. God called the Israelite nation to extend its borders to the Euphrates; but they never conquered it : so the Church has a great number of unfaithful members. To tempt these to their destruction, the evil power is allowed, as a vast host of worldly power, with noisome exhalations of evil thoughts, to make their attack. But many, whose souls are not wholly dead, are not led by these sights to repentance (13-21).

'O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.'

C. Jesus said, 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me'. While we know from our Lord's teaching the reality of our spiritual enemies, the evil spirits trying to draw us away from Christ, we know Christ in us ready to expel all evil, and the Holy Spirit ready to guide our thoughts.

'Praise to the God of my salvation : Salvation is of Christ the Lord.'

25. GOD CALLS US ALL TO BEAR WITNESS TO HIS JUDGEMENTS AGAINST SIN IN THE WORLD. X.

Our Lord is represented in the vision, as Ruler of this world, by an Angel. We remember that He has received the Book of God's purposes to disclose them to us (chapter v). No one else can know God's purposes as Jesus does; but He has 'a little Book' showing such aspects of them as man can understand.

A. The Angel bears the character and appearance of our Lord as shown in chapter I: the cloud which veils Him from unbelievers in His judgements; the rainbow which tells of His union with His faithful; His Light for human Life; His dwelling amongst us in His Church. With the little Book in hand He stands as Master of a sinful and godless world ('sea' and 'earth'). He has further warnings to give ('thunders'), which men cannot yet understand. His message is to His faithful servants in the world. He proclaims that we are living in the last generation of the world; the vision of His final glory will be seen in the seventh Trumpet (xi. 14-19), in which we see the full completion of the prophecies from the beginning (1-7).

'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head over all.'

B. St. John is bidden to receive the little Book as from our Lord's hand. It is a message full of assurance and sweetness—the faith in our unseen Lord as Ruler of this world, and of His presence amongst us to combat the great evil of sin. But then the Seer becomes conscious that this glorious truth, if rejected by men, must involve the terrible bitterness of God's condemnation (8-10).

'Lord, show to me the Lamb which has been slain, that I may know that perfect love is indeed at the heart of the world.'

C. The Seer is to bear witness to Christ in the world (11).

Our Lord bade us in His Church to bear such witness, for our standing is that of Christ in us (Acts 1. 8). What witness to Christ does our personal life give? by what we are in character? by loving drawing of souls of others to Christ? Are we full of penitence for having injured or failed to help the souls of others?

'May we never shrink back, not act a coward's part when Thou dost call us to work or suffer for Thee.'

26. GOD SENDS HIS CHURCH TO WITNESS TO HIM IN A HOSTILE WORLD. XI. 1-13.

It is the company of true servants of God who receive the commission: but the company of those who profess the Faith without reality, who fail to follow it out in their lives, will be trampled in the mud by the world of indifference and sin. We meditate on x. 1-4.

A. In vision the Seer receives from God a measuring rod to set apart the Church of the faithful in Christ in safety (its inner sanctuary in which God dwells; its pleading of the great Sacrifice of Christ; those who worship in spirit and in truth): but its 'outer court', the region of those who 'hold a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof', is given over to be trampled under foot by worldly influences (1, 2).

We know how worldly theories of the place of religion in life distract souls from loving giving of themselves to God—of ideas of marriage and purity; of a false self-expression; of disparagement of community worship—which kill off obedience to Christ in a society which yet claims to be Christian. As against all this, praise God as Lord of our lives—'Blessed be God. Blessed be the most Holy and undivided Trinity. Blessed be God, the Father Almighty. Blessed be Jesus Christ, God and Man. Blessed be the most Holy Name of Jesus. Blessed be Jesus Christ on His Throne of Glory. Blessed be God the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Blessed be the most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints. Blessed be God.'

B. The true Church is to witness ('2', the number of witness) to the revelation of God through Christ. 'God may have other words for other worlds, but for this world the Word of God is Christ.' Its witness covers an era which from God's point of view is $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, from Satan's 42 months, from man's who experiences it day by day 1,260 days. The Church is to mourn for sin—'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' The Church is the source through which the witness of the Holy Spirit flows: in its devotional life it is always in the Sanctuary of God (3, 4).

Do we pray earnestly for a sinful world in our Eucharists? 'By Thine Agony and Bloody sweat; by Thy Cross and Passion; by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost Good Lord deliver us.'

C. Pray that you may stand for Christ in the world—'Lord, make me Thy transparency, that I may shew forth Thy Light through the clear glass of word and look and act.'

**27. THE WITNESSING CHURCH, BEING IN CHRIST, WILL EXPERIENCE
A CRUCIFIXION, A RESURRECTION, AND AN ASCENSION. XI. 5-13.**

Jesus said, 'I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you'; 'In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'.

A. The Church's power in the world lies in the fact of Christ in us. It ministers the 'fire' of God's purpose, when it denounces the enemies of Christ. It can close the door of the kingdom of heaven to unbelievers and sinners, who may not receive the 'rain' of God's grace. It can show the false doctrines of the world, not as the life-giving doctrines of truth in God, but as resulting in lives, which should have been given to God, being now just dead blood on earth. It can minister to sinners the plagues spoken of in this book (5, 6).

'O come, let us worship and bow down to Christ, our King and our God.'

B. The evil spirit of the world will do towards a truly witnessing Church as he did to our Lord Himself. Jerusalem in its hatred of our Lord became as the city of destruction and the land of exile. So false, unwitnessing religion is the cause of the seeming death of true faith. The godless world looks on and mocks, during such period as it is allowed by God to test the world; it will be a mockery of the Christian Festivals. For true religion is always the enemy of godless lives, and hated by them (7-10).

How far has our personal religion been a true witness for Christ?

How far have we dared to suffer in the spirit of the Cross to make Him known to the world?

'Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us.'

C. But a faithful, witnessing Church will share in our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension. The Holy Spirit, who brought Life to it on Whitsunday, will cause it to live with new and higher Life. The world will fear and wonder (11, 12). Through the Church's witness in its renewed life, the city of false religion which has been the cause that Christ and His witnessing Church has so seemed to fail, will meet with a destruction great in the view of men. Spiritual death will come to those who have made covenant with Satan, but will be a fulfilment of God's purpose ('names of men seven thousand'). Others, not so fully condemned, will fear and so far wonder at what they see, but give no signs of repentance (13).

'O merciful Jesus, who, when Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, didst not abhor the Virgin's womb, vouchsafe evermore to dwell in the hearts of us Thy servants; inspire us with Thy purity, strengthen us with Thy might, make us perfect in Thy ways, guide us into Thy truth; that we may conquer every adverse power, and be wholly devoted to Thy service and conformed to Thy will; to the glory of God the Father.'

28. THE WORLD IS SEEN IN PROPHETIC VISION AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS CHRIST. XI. 14-19.

The Church ('the 24 Elders'), as priesthood for the creation, sees in the revelation of the seventh Trumpet, not only a fullness of joy to the faithful, but also its terrible meaning to those who refuse the offer of God's love. The end of the world, as it is now, is shown.

A. The song of joyous triumph is that of the whole company of heaven—of all who stand before God as children of His Love. The song finds deep sympathy in the heart of the Church as the Priesthood for Creation, now seen enthroned with Christ, as in chapter IV. We hear them praise the All-Sovereign Lord and God, who in His eternity exists as the source of all life, and who has been manifested on earth from the beginning. But now He is not spoken of as 'He that cometh', for we have before us now the rehearsal of the final scene of this universe (15-17).

'Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers:

And to be praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed art Thou on the glorious Throne of Thy kingdom:

And to be praised and glorified above all for ever.'

B. 'The wrath of God' in His majesty is met by the wrath of the godless and sinful ('the nations'). The time for repentance is past. But we hear of the reward of all the faithful, who have accepted God in conquest of temptation, and pursuance of holiness. Of these there is a threefold description—they are witnesses to God; consecrated to God's service; giving glory to God. Sin and disobedience to God has destroyed the present earth, dragging it down from its true life, and its consequence can only be the spiritual ruin of those who have ruined the world. The word of prophecy is fulfilled (18).

Call in spirit to the world we know—'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.'

C. To the faithful the Sanctuary of God as Ruler of the world is seen in the Christ, God's appointed meeting-place with man. In Christ is seen the perfect Law of God for man (as the commandments were enshrined in the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle); for man in covenant with God must give himself to obey the Law of God. But they too must not forget that all this beauty and glory, if refused, must bring God's judgements on all who refuse to give themselves to Him in answer to perfect Love (19).

'O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

29. THE ANTI-TRINITY OF EVIL IS REVEALED; THE ORGANIZING POWER BEHIND THE PREVALENCE OF SIN, IN OPPOSITION TO THE MOST HOLY TRINITY. XII, XIII.

We see first Satan as 'the dragon' opposing God's purpose of the Incarnation. XII. 1-6.

A. The Blessed Virgin is seen as the symbol of God's purpose for mankind through His Church. She is clothed with the glory of her Divine Son: she rises out of the ancient Church of God; she is crowned with the witnessing lives of true children of God. God's purpose for the Church of His Son was prepared for by the long travail of the ages before Christ (1, 2).

'Glory be to Thee who has shewn us Thy Light.'

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good-will. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks unto Thee for Thy great glory.'

B. The enemy of God's purpose of the Incarnation is revealed. He was created for great service of God in heaven and on earth, with great natural power of mind, endowed with authority ('diadems'), with influence in high earthly measure ('horns'). But, choosing to serve self in place of God, he is able to detach from God's service many of the company of Angels. That God allows this seems to be marked by 'the third part', for '3' is constantly that which notes the work of God. He witnesses the Incarnation of the Ruler of the world with deep malice. He would draw Him into sin: but Jesus so gave Himself from the beginning of His earthly sojourn to God's service that Satan could get no hold on Him, whose life is hid in God (3-5).

We cannot attempt to fathom the mystery of created beings who are able to set themselves in opposition to their Creator. 'Teach me not to be afraid of the silences and mysteries of the world, knowing that the Conqueror has broken the seals.'

C. 'The wilderness' is a symbol of withdrawal from the dangers of earthliness into the peace of communion with God. (There is another 'wilderness' in XVII. 3 of withdrawal from God and communion with a sinful world.) But peace is found even in the midst of great tribulation, signified from man's point of view by the '1,260 days' (6).

Into such conscious living with God we are called through the Sacraments of God's grace. 'Hide not Thyself from me amid the common surroundings of my everyday life. Enable me in all lowliness to die to self, to hear Thy voice, and to be so near to Thee that Thou mayest lay Thy strong hand upon me.'

30. THE VICTORY OF THE INCARNATE SON OVER SATAN. XII. 7-12.

Having seen Satan in fierce opposition to the Father's purpose of the Incarnation and banished from the Divine presence, we now see him conquered in his contest against the Incarnate Son on earth, as in the Gospel story.

A. Heaven is the Light of God's presence and love. No evil can live in that presence. Adam and Eve found it intolerable after their sin: so the rebellious Angels could find no place there. At the head of the anti-God movement is found one who is a blasphemous parody of God the Father. He is named 'the dragon'—'the old serpent' (recalling the tempter of the Genesis story)—'the devil' ("deceiver")—'Satan' (the adversary). Originally given power for God's service in Creation, he is still allowed, for God's purposes, to bring temptation to the whole inhabited world. He succeeds with those who refuse to give themselves to God ('earth') (7-9).

Rejoice that, in the midst of a sinful world, the grace of the Conqueror has been and is now manifested—"To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." "We know that He was manifested to take away sins."

B. We are shown the results of our Lord's mission to the world. 'Salvation' (freedom from bondage to sin) is won for man by our Lord's perfect obedience to the Father. It has resulted in the establishment of a kingdom of God on earth under the rule of Christ, the King. By His unstinted giving of Himself in a life of complete self-sacrifice His faithful servants are enabled to conquer temptation. They bear witness to Him in the world in the spirit of His Cross (10, 11).

'O God, whose Blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.'

C. There is joyous confidence in those who truly follow the Christ. The 'earth' of indifference to God and the 'sea' of a sinful world are warned of the fearful danger of giving way to the deceits of the devil. But Satan's power is always limited by God (12).

'Grant that we may conquer by the Life-blood of the Lamb, and pour out our life as freely as Thou hast given Thy life for us.'

31. THE SALVATION OF THE FAITHFUL CHURCH FROM THE ATTACK OF THE DRAGON. XII. 13-17a.

(The last words, 'And he stood . . .', belong to the next chapter.)

The Holy Mother of the vision is seen now as the symbol of the Church of Christ; for the Mother of the Christ is thereby the Mother of the Church which is His Body, the 'fullness of Him who filleth all things in all persons'.

A. The dragon can only find his place in the heart of those who refuse to be sons of God in Christ ('earth'). Through them he persecutes true children of God. In their hearts God has implanted a natural witness to God, a consciousness of God implying deep insight, an eagle vision, which draws them into the wilderness of separation from the world for communion with God. God cares for them, conscious of all their need, during the time of tribulation, spoken of as the time of preparation ('3½') for the fulfilment of God's covenant ('7') with them (13, 14).

Praise God for the opening to us of the sanctuary of God's presence and love, even now on earth. 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless, till it finds rest in Thee.'

B. 'The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God.' Such is the grace of the Holy Ghost with His spiritual doctrines. But the flood of false doctrines is poured out by the dragon to sweep the Church off her standing-place in Christ. That too is fundamentally turned by God to good: for the godless world tires of false doctrines, as it tires of the truth; and the doctrines of the world are ever changing (15, 16).

Pray for the Church—'O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

C. As in the worldly world there are many who may be accepted as not against the Christ, a 'remnant' of some faith, so in the nominal borders of the Church there is a remnant whose obedience and witness to Christ falls short of the loving service of the faithful. Satan finds a special sphere for attack in these (17).

'Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

32. THE 'FIRST BEAST', THE SPIRIT OF WORLDLY INDEPENDENCE OF GOD, THE EMISSARY OF THE DRAGON, IS SEEN AS A MOCKING PARODY OF JESUS, THE EMISSARY OF GOD THE FATHER. XII. 17b-XIII. 10.

The dragon stands on the shifting ground left by the sea of sin. From that 'sea' of sin (as our Lord from the ancient Church of God) there comes one with earthly power, a covenanted throne of many clever devices, and earthly authority ('diadems'), as our Lord has all authority in heaven and on earth. The kingdom of Jesus is full of revelation of God—the beast's full of blasphemy. Jesus shares in the nature of the 'four living creatures' which represent God's creation—the beast has the sudden spring of the leopard, the relentless hug of the bear, the devouring power of the lion. Jesus was crucified and rose again to new life and is worshipped—the beast, conquered by Jesus, is admired and worshipped, for he is yet seen free to do his evil will within a limited region (1-5). He would persuade men against God's revelation of Himself, the Christ, God's meeting-place with man, those who choose life in Christ with God. He may make war even against those born to new life in Christ: he has power to test all men who will listen to him (6-7). His worshippers are those who refuse to worship God ('dwell on the earth'), who are not reckoned in the roll of true servants of Jesus (8).

A. In view of all this, we would cast ourselves down in humble, faithful, loving worship of God in view of His redemption of men from the awful curse of neglect of God and His most holy will.

'I bind unto myself the Name, the strong name of the Trinity; by invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three; of whom all nature hath creation; Eternal Father, Spirit, Word: Praise to the Lord of my salvation; Salvation is of Christ, the Lord.'

B. 'If any man hath an ear, let him hear' (9). The familiar words remind us that Jesus, who now speaks out of the full presence and love of God, is the same Jesus whose earthly life is recorded in the Gospel.

We have heard Him; we do know Him; we would give ourselves wholly to Him, with penitence for our failures in obedience and love, but with great hope of full pardon and restoration. 'God be merciful to me a sinner': 'May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost.'

C. The law of God stands. He who kills souls, his soul is killed. He who tempts to sin must himself be plunged into the horror of sin (10). With patience and faith pray—

'O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.'

33. THE 'SECOND BEAST', THE SPIRIT OF UNREAL RELIGIOUS PROFESSION, COMMISSIONED BY THE DRAGON, IS SEEN AS A PARODY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. XIII. 11-18.

Our book lays much stress upon spurious religious profession as the most deadly enemy of true faith in Christ, as in XVII. 5.

A. The 'first beast' was seen emerging from his sphere of special influence, the 'sea' of sin; the 'second beast' comes out of the worldly world ('earth') of the first beast, to corrupt religion with worldly motives. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the Christ as the Lamb of God, and speaks with the authority of the Father—the second beast pretends to a similar power while he speaks for the dragon. The Holy Spirit acts as the Spirit of Jesus—the other is the servant of the first beast. The One leads men to the worship of Jesus, the other to that of His mocking counterpart, the first beast. Marvels of the Holy Spirit are parodied by pretended heavenly signs to 'deceive even the elect' (11-14a). The Holy Spirit came as the Life of the Church, the 'image of Christ'—the second beast has his anti-Church company, the 'image of the first beast'. The Church speaks Christian truth and can excommunicate sinners—the second beast speaks the will of the first and can martyr the children of God (14b, 15). The Holy Spirit marks us in Baptism as members of Christ—the second beast makes the mark of the first on men's actions and minds. The Church separates itself from the ungodly, while the anti-Church boycotts the servants of God from worldly advantages (16, 17).

Praise the Christ—"When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

B. The Christ and His faithful are ever going forward into new Life, signified by the number '8'. (On an eighth day, the beginning of a new week, Jesus rose: on an eighth day the Church came to life. The Holy Name, Jesus, since Greek numbers are expressed by letters, signifies '888', for he always goes beyond the '7' of the Covenant into new Life in God.) So that which always falls short of the requirements of God's Covenant is expressed in the number '666' (18).

'May I realize that the door is now open into the heavens, and may I enter in and dwell there.'

C. Whether we are conscious of it or not, every thought in our minds is forming our character, whether on the upward path of holiness, or on the downward path of bondage to sin. Pray that you may go forward in the way of Life.

'May the crown Thou hast given me of free personality be given back to Thee, and never worn unworthily for myself. Of Thine own have we given Thee.'

34. THE FAITHFUL COMPANY OF THE REDEEMED CHURCH ARE CALLED TO BE ASSESSORS WITH JESUS IN A REHEARSAL OF THE HARVEST JUDGEMENT OF MANKIND. XIV.

In the background of the revelation of the blaspheming anti-Trinity of hell we are consoled by seeing the great purpose of God in calling us to share in the triumph of the Christ. XIV. 1-5.

A. The scene is Mount Zion, the ideal Church of God, manifested in the Israelite nation and in the Church Catholic. 'Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . the general assembly and Church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' (Hebr. XII. 22, 23). The '144,000' describes their character as children of God in Christ ('3×4', the '12' of sacramental life); multiplied again on itself during the ages, '144'; perfected as shown in God's number of perfection, '1,000'. Their minds are full of the revelation ('Name') of God. Jesus stands amongst them as their Priest, who offers Himself wholly to God. They hear the song of the whole body of God's children in the heavenly places of heaven and earth, recalling manifold teachings of the Holy Spirit mingled with warnings of judgement. It is the music of holy lives that is heard in glorious harmony, before God and His redeemed Creation, with the Church as its priesthood. None but the redeemed can learn the song. The song is new, for it celebrates the new Life brought to man by Jesus (1-3).

'Praise the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me praise His Holy Name.'

B. The character of the redeemed company is that they are presented to Christ as 'Virgin' souls (2 Cor. XI. 2), free from the spiritual 'fornication' of an unreal religious profession. Christ has called them out of the worldly world to be a pledge of the glorious harvest of faithful souls, which will come. The 'father of lies' has no hold on them; they are in harmony with Christ, the Lamb without blemish (4, 5).

'Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

C. How far have you been able to substitute in your general life the aim and prayer that God through Christ may be glorified in you in place of the far less satisfactory aim of self-development?

'Lord, make me Thy transparency, that I may shew forth Thy light through the clear glass of word and look and act.'

35. THE GODLESS ARE NOT LEFT WITHOUT A LAST CHANCE OF TURNING TO GOD, THEIR CREATOR. XIV. 6-13.

A. An Angel representative of the Father has a Gospel ('good news') of God as Creator to proclaim to those who have made the world their throne ('sit on the earth') throughout the world. May not the word 'eternal' give us hope for those who may turn to God even beyond the grave? We cannot say. The appeal to the ungodly is, Will they not at last in view of seeing Him as Creator and Lord of the world, enter on the way of salvation, even at the last? (6, 7).

Praise God as Creator—'O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

O let the earth bless the Lord; yea let it praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

O ye children of men, bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever.'

B. The judgement on sin is rehearsed before we hear of the Harvest of the world. First an Angel of Christ proclaims the condemnation of the great enemy of true religion, the 'harlot' company of those who in Name profess the Christ, but deny Him by their life (8). Then another Angel, representing the Holy Spirit, tells of the judgement against those who take Satan for their ruler in thought and act. The chalice of Christ, of mingled wine and water, signs of cleansing and life, has been refused; they are to receive the chalice of 'the wrath of God' unmingled. They are punished by the sulphurous emanations of their evil thoughts. Since this is 'in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb', there can be nothing inconsistent with the supreme Love of God: but this, and the 'for ever and ever' (literally, 'unto ages of ages'), we know that we cannot yet understand. There can be no rest for man apart from God (8-11).

'Give me the victory, O my Conqueror, and may I prove to-day that Thou art overcoming myself, my circumstances, and my hindrances.'

C. The patience of God's true children lies in the faith by which they endure the worldly atmosphere of sin, being assured that it is all in the hands of the God of perfect Love. The glorious blessing is for those who thus live and die in patient faith (12, 13).

'God made me to know Him, love Him, and serve Him, and to be happy with Him for ever.'

'Lord, increase our faith.'

36. THE HARVEST OF THE SOULS OF MEN IS REHEARSED. XIV. 14-20.

Our Lord's parable of the Tares (St. Matthew XIII. 24-30) tells us of the harvest as a type of His Judgement of the world. We now see the reward of faithful servants of God as well as the condemnation of the godless and sinners.

A. Jesus Himself is first seen, enthroned on the 'cloud', which is so often connected with His coming in judgement, crowned with His victorious giving Himself wholly to God to fulfil the will of God, and holding the instrument of harvest, which is the word of God for mankind. To Him there comes an Angel of the Father, telling Him that God's 'hour' for judgement has come. The grain of faithful souls is fully ripe and firm (14-16).

Praise God for His gracious purpose to restore our lives and to call us into the fullness of His radiation of infinite love—'Look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth: so great is His mercy also towards them that fear Him. Look how wide also the east is from the west: so far hath He set our sins from us. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children: even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him.'

B. An Angel of the Christ in judgement is seen (for in His judgement He acts through heavenly and earthly ministers), ready to carry out the judgement of condemnation. To him there comes an Angel of the Holy Spirit's work, calling to him that the clusters of the 'vine' of the godless and sinful earth have reached their maturity. 'Put ye in the sickle, for the vintage is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great' (Joel III. 13). Men are now seen in association with others, uniting in the following of evil against God: it is not merely the vintage, but the vine itself that is cast into the press. As our Lord was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem (Hebr. XIII. 12), so these suffer in banishment from the City of God. The Hosts of God ride through the flood of lives of men sacrificed to sin on earth, though it seems almost to submerge them (Zech. XIV. 20—'bells' there may be also translated 'bridles'). The idea of the great body of godless life is shown in the number (parodying that of the Faithful '144,000')—'4', the number of earth, multiplied on itself, and again on the number of an earthly perfection, '100' (17-20).

'Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us.'

C. Against all this, set your heart and mind to learn to love the Saviour more.

'Jesu, my Lord, I Thee adore; O make me love Thee more and more.'

37. THE VISION OF A REDEEMED WORLD PREPARES US FOR A FINAL REHEARSAL OF THE JUDGEMENTS WHICH FOLLOW ON SIN. XV.

The 'plagues' resulting from sin in the visions of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls belong to life on earth from the earliest days to the end of time; they are all working on earth now.

A. The seven Angels seem to be those of the Christ in His Church, as in I. 20, for through the Church come the doctrine, sacraments, and discipline, which test the world. In the 'Bowls' we find an increased intensity beyond that of the Seals and the Trumpets. We are encouraged first in the wonderful vision of a redeemed world. The tossing, restless 'sea' of a world's sin is no more. Created to love and serve God, it is restored by the 'fire', which purifies the penitent and banishes sin. Upon this renewed world, now transparent all through to God's Light, there stand as Priests of God those who have escaped in Christ from the bondage of the spirit of the world, from his indwelling, and from his character. We hear the glorious harmony of godly lives (1, 2).

Praise God, the Creator—"Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages."

B. The song tells of God's triumphs through His Church—that of Moses after the deliverance at the Red Sea, 'I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously', and that of the Incarnate Life of the Lamb of God, 'Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins'. God is All-Sovereign King of the ages. We hear of a world restored to its true relation to God, the ideal of which we have seen in chapter IV (3, 4).

Pray for the world in the words which Jesus taught us, 'Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.'

C. In this glorious anticipation we are called to see into the sanctuary of the heart and mind of God in Jesus, God's Tabernacle of fullest meeting with man. For in Christ is God's testimony, His witness to man of truth in life (5). The Angels of the Church of God are arrayed in one precious stone, for in Christ they have attained to perfect unity. They share in our Lord's 'girdle' (I. 13) of royal authority over the world (6). In sympathy with God, they experience the reaction of God's revelation of Himself against sin (cf. Is. VI. 4). The time is past when intercession can avail (7, 8).

'Lord, open the windows and doors of my heart, my mind, and my soul, that I may behold the glorious unveiling of Thyself.'

38. THE DEEPEST INTENSITY OF THE RESULTS OF SIN. (a) XVI. 1-9.

The 'Seals' seem to deal with judgements in Man's bodily life; the 'Trumpets' with his soul or mind; the 'Bowls' with the spirit at the centre of his being.

A. In the Seals the call for judgement came from the natural creation; in the Trumpets from our Lord and His people in prayer; in the Bowls it is seen as the direct action of God against the sin which has ruined the world (1). The spirit of man, refusing Life from God, wakes up to a terrible bitterness of remorse, quite alien from the penitence of love to the Father of all (2). Men have refused the redeeming love and are plunged into the sea of 'dead blood' of men; each sinner, a 'soul of life', has become a dead blood-cell (3). The 'water' of the Holy Spirit's guidance has been refused: the doctrines of the world are seen as dead blood. The Angel representing true doctrines of life proclaims the justice of God's judgement. Sinners shed God's gift of earthly life, and receive a fitting punishment in the death of their spirit through sin (4-6). The Altar of our Lord's sacrifice adds its testimony to the perfect truth and justice of the judgement (7). The fourth Bowl sums up the cause of the judgement as the rejection of the Christ. In the Seals the 'Sun of righteousness' was obscured; in the Trumpets it was smitten; in the Bowls its Light burns up the spirits of men. The pain leads, not to repentance, but to blasphemy (8, 9).

Glorify God by mourning with the faithful for the sin of the world — 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' 'By Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, Good Lord deliver us.'

B. In serving God in truth we make our contribution to the glory of God on earth; in serving sin we contribute to the great anti-God movement on earth. Seeing this, we should be vastly more contrite for our own sins and those of the world. St. Paul grew in penitence from 'I am not worthy of my high calling in Christ'; through 'I am less than the least of God's people'; to 'Sinners, of whom I am chief'. Love and repentance were one in him. As we grow older, our penitence for past and present sin should become deeper.

'Almighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

C. In repentance we should have strongly in view, not only what we ask to be freed from, but also what we are freed for. Forgiveness restores us to right relation to God.

'God made me to know Him, love Him, and serve Him, and to be happy with Him for ever.' 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'

39. THE DEEPEST INTENSITY OF THE FACTS OF SIN. (b) XVI. 10-21.

At the fifth Bowl, as in the fifth Seal and the fifth Trumpet, we are shown into the unseen world.

A. The dominion of the spirit of the world in the heart and mind of men is dealt with. The followers of the first beast, refusing light, are plunged into an appalling darkness of spirit, full of mental pain and blasphemy, without any signs of repentance (10, 11). Euphrates was to be the boundary of God's Israelite nation; but they never really annexed it. The land which should have been God's land stands in this Book for the company of professing Christians who in practice deny the Christ. We have heard of it also as 'Babylon', the city which led God's people into captivity. The boundary between it and the world is no more, and the Hosts of true religion come to conquer it, by the revelation of Christ as the Lord come in judgement (12). In contrast to God's call through Jesus we see the anti-Trinity of evil and its demons croaking evil commands, and showing unearthly signs, to gather the influences of the world for a final contest against God (13, 14). Jesus warns His faithful, as in the Gospel story, that they must be always ready for Him, and keep the robe of righteousness which He has given them (15). 'Armageddon', historically the scene of many victories of the Israelites, is a type of God's final victory (16).

Rejoice in the certainty of victory if we persevere in faith in Christ — 'The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me.'
'The prince of this world hath been judged.'

B. In the midst of a region of worldly aspirations God's voice is heard, proclaiming an end to them all, with 'lightning' revelation of real truth; His 'voices' in the consciences of men; the 'thunders' of warning. The great policy which men have followed is utterly overthrown. The city of the world is given to the anti-Trinity of hell. Spurious profession of religion receives the fullness of the 'wrath of God'. No refuge can be found in earthly or sinful institutions of the world. To the godless the rain of God's grace has become as a devastating 'hail' of fullest intensity, answered by human blasphemy (17-21).

'Defend us, O Lord, with Thy heavenly grace, that we may continue Thine for ever, and may daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until we come unto Thy everlasting kingdom.'

C. Let us hold fast indeed to our salvation in Christ, as people who are 'taken captive by the Lord's Servant to the will of God'.

'O Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, help us this day and every day to know Thee more clearly, to love Thee more dearly, to follow Thee more nearly, for Thine own sake.'

40. THE MOST DANGEROUS ENEMY OF OUR FAITH—THE CHURCH OF PROFESSION WITHOUT OBEDIENCE TO THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL LAW OF CHRIST. XVII.

It is easy to see that open denial of God and obvious sin do not turn souls away from Christ so surely as the example of those who lead by their example to the idea that our belief makes little claim upon our lives (1-6).

A. The scene, introduced by an Angel of the true Church, shows the unfaithful Church enthroned on the false ideals and doctrines of the world, committing spiritual fornication with the world—as against the true Church as the Bride of Christ—fostering the antagonism of the world to the revelation of God (1, 2). The scene is laid in a ‘wilderness’ of separation from God and communion with the world. We now see the ‘woman’ (parody of the woman of chapter XII) enthroned on the first beast of chapter XIII, the spirit of the world. The beast has the colour of the robe placed on our Lord by His enemies in His Passion, and has his covenanted followers (‘7’), and strong earthly power. As our Lord has His Church full of spiritual persons, so the beast has ‘names of blasphemy’ (3). The woman displays her ‘purple’ of false worship, with her scarlet of sympathy towards the beast. The Church is adorned with one precious stone, its unity in Christ; the false Church with the varied glories of the world. She has her chalice, offering her falsehoods and pretences to all who will accept them. As the Church is a ‘mystery’ of ‘revelation’ of God, so is she of spiritual harlotry (cf. 1. 20) (4-5). It is she who has led the world in its shedding of the blood of the Martyrs of Christ (6).

Praise Jesus for His true Church—‘And I hold in veneration, For the love of Him alone, Holy Church as His creation, And her teachings as His own.’

B. We must realize the vital danger of unreal profession of the faith in Christ as utterly militating against the witness which the Church should be ever making before the world. Surely it is of God’s set purpose that the danger should be represented to us in this startling way. Consider how the lives of professing Christians, who do not obey the lead of the Christ, is constantly alleged as reason for neglect of the faith. If all membership of Christ was bearing witness to Him, the world would be utterly different from what we find it to be.

‘O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church.’

C. Look on your own life to repent of failures to bear witness to the character and grace of the Christ, and pray—

‘Make me Thy transparency, that I may shew forth Thy Light through the clear glass of word and look and act.’

41. THE FALSE CHURCH'S PRIDE IN DOMINATING THE WORLD WILL HAVE A DECISIVE FALL. XVII. 7-18.

The essential evil in a false profession of religion is that it bears witness against God and the Faith in Christ, and leads men to refuse to give themselves to God.

A. The first beast, the emissary of Satan, is shown again as exhibiting a parody of the Christ, who was and is and cometh. The beast was manifested on earth, is not, for he is conquered by Jesus and goeth into perdition. He too has his admiring followers (7, 8). His confederacy is marked by an utterly earthly policy, accepting the anti-God example of false religion. It is founded on earthly powers, great earthly influences of the present and future (9, 10). As our Lord is marked by '8', ever going forward in righteousness, so the beast is 'an eighth' in pursuance of evil, while, as our Lord acts as from His faithful, so the beast from his confederacy (11). His power resides in these great earthly influences, which in God's purpose 'have their time and cease to be'. They make war against the Lamb of God and those who follow in the spirit of His Cross, who shall conquer (12-14). The false doctrines on which the faithless Church is enthroned are in the heart and mind of the men and women of the world (15).

'Rejoice over her, thou heaven' (the whole Host of God in the unseen and in heavenly places on earth), 'and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgement on her.'

B. The godless world itself will grow utterly restive under the dominance of even a pretence of religion. Its powers will work with the beast, making any semblance of religion no concern of theirs in their own lives. More still it will make a sacrifice of the false church, devouring her flesh, as their own godless communion. In this they will but be unconsciously giving themselves to work out the purposes of God. Again the 'woman' is spoken of as 'Babylon', 'the great city which hath a kingdom which reigneth over the kings of the earth' (the godless world) (16-18).

Jesus said of His faithful disciples for all time, 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . . As Thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.' 'I pray for them also, that believe on me through their word.'—'Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all Godly quietness.'

C. The way of victory does not lie in our own strength, but in our aim that Christ may be in all things glorified in us.

'Take from me conventional religion, self-consciousness, sluggishness of will, and all that keeps me back from the heavenly vision.'

42. THE JUDGEMENT ON UNREAL PROFESSION OF RELIGION. XVIII.

In XVII we have seen false religion cast down by the worldly power which it has claimed to guide. We now see God's judgement on it rehearsed.

A. An Angel representative of our Lord's authority flashes the Light of the Sun of righteousness upon a world withheld from God. 'Babylon', which falsely claims to be a city of God, is at the mercy of evil spirits and degenerate natural powers (1-3). God's people are called to flee from dealings with it. Its punishment is in proportion to its evil character. The 'woman' has boasted and still boasts of her influence in the world and has earned spiritual death in place of the Life which Christ offers; she has not mourned for sin, but must mourn for herself; she has not hungered for righteousness but must hunger in an awful dissatisfaction. The fire of God's rejected love burns up her soul (4-8). No longer can a godless world shelter itself from the faith in Christ by her example. (We hear the lamentation of the great influences of the world (9, 10); of those who have made earthly wealth through her, by selling to her things which she has used in a false mockery of real worship; and things of war; and bodies and souls of men, which she should have given to God (11-16). Those who have made sin their life in place of holiness, the 'sea' of sin, join in the lamentation over the fall of a religion which was in truth no religion; this false religion would claim the name of Christian, but has chosen earthly wealth in place of the riches of Christ (17-19). (The judgement draws nearer; the kings 'shall weep'; the merchants 'weep'; sin 'stood afar off and cried'.) God's faithful are to rejoice in the fall of that which deceives the world (20).)

'Glorify God by your act of faith in His perfect justice, knowing that in due time we shall understand what we cannot yet grasp—
'O Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgements.'

B. The revelation of Jesus in His Church (the millstone which grinds the wheat of our life) has been cast into the 'sea' of a sinful world for its judgement, and been rejected. The harlot church is thrown into the world to be stripped of all her pride and boasting. No harmony of holy lives, no art of moulding true lives, no provision of holy bread before God, no light of Christ, no marriage of such a church with its Lord are found in her. Earthly wealth, and deceiving of mankind and the blood of the Martyrs are what she has found (21-24).

Pray for the Church to be saved from all unreality—'O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.'

C. Consider how far we have failed to be really Christian in our prayer-life, in giving way to sin, in failing to learn love to God and man. Our failures have contributed to degeneracy in the Church.

'O Lord Almighty, God of our fathers, we pray Thee, hear and have mercy.'



SECTION V

CHAPTER XIX. I-10

The song of triumphal anticipation of glorious Life in Christ.

'I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.'

'Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

43. THE PEACE OF GOD RESTS UPON HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS IN HIS CHURCH MANIFESTED AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST. XIX. 1-10.

On Maundy Thursday our Lord gathered His faithful disciples in the Upper Room and spoke to them words of glorious hope and comfort. They knew of the Cross which was immediately to come, but they could not yet understand. So in face of the visions of terrible condemnation the faithful are assured of the perfect justice and righteousness of the judgements.

A. We hear the triumphal song of the whole body of the redeemed, in anticipation of the fulfilment of our Lord's great Maundy Thursday Prayer, 'I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do'. Now the Christ in His perfected Church ascribes all the glory to the Father for the final condemnation of the chief enemy of God, the company of false pretence in religion, though the actual last contest waits to be spoken of in the next part of the chapter. It seems that the terrible effluence of evil thought and vile act, diverted from the perfected company of God's true children, can no longer touch them; but other souls remain to be dealt with by the Father in the ages to come (1-3). The whole Church of God, together with the creation, for which it is God's appointed priesthood, prostrates itself in worship of God, and God Himself calls them to join in the great song of adoring praise (4, 5).

'We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.'

B. In response, the whole company of the redeemed—a great multitude, expressing countless aspects of Godly doctrine—finds the perfect harmony of praise in the perfected union of the Christ with His people. The Church is clothed by God in perfect righteousness, learned on earth. They thrill with the remembrance of our Lord's foretelling of the great festival of the faithful, now to be fulfilled (6-9).

'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ; Thou art the everlasting Son, of the Father. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.'

C. No created being may receive the worship which belongs to God alone. Jesus, Himself God, sums up the testimony of all prophecy, in calling us to worship the Father (10).

'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.'

SECTION VI

CHAPTERS XIX. II-XXII. 5

The Final Contest and the Victory of the Christ with and in His people.

‘Out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations’ (the godless and sinful): ‘and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’

‘Behold, I make all things new.’

‘There shall be no curse any more: and the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and His servants shall do Him service; and they shall see His face; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.’

44. THE FINAL BANISHMENT OF SIN AND THE GATHERING HOME OF THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF GOD. XIX. 11-XXII. 5.

The fourth Gospel tells of God's purpose in the Cross and Resurrection, or conquest of sin and gift of new Life to man: so here we see the final conquest of the powers of evil and the perfected gift of the Church as the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ. We read of the overthrow of Satan's two emissaries and their followers in XIX. 11-21.

A. Jesus, as in the first Seal of chapter VI, is seen conquering by righteousness and truth. God's love shines through Him as fire which cleanses believers and scorches those who refuse it. He is crowned with full authority in heaven and on earth. He alone, God and Man, knows all that He means to us. His character shows the marks of perfect self-sacrifice. He is the revelation of God's purpose to man (11-13). He leads God's children, as priests with Him in righteousness and freedom from sin. He proclaims God's truth, which 'discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart', to condemn the wicked, whom He rules, not with the crook of the Good Shepherd, but with the 'rod of iron'. He ministers God's purpose of the result of sin. He is and acts as 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (14-16).

The contest is going on now. Pray, 'In Thy Majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness'.

B. An Angel stands in the authority of the Christ, calling to a regenerate creation, not the unclean birds of XVIII. 2, to absorb the great influences and varieties of human life into itself (the 'flesh' which sin has marred) to be the home of a redeemed creation (17, 18). The two 'beast' emissaries of the dragon are imprisoned in the furnace of their own noisome thoughts. The Christ deals with their followers by His word of God. Nature, now instinct with truth, receives its own again (19-21).

'O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness: and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!'

C. Every thought, word, and deed of daily life is producing character in us. Which are we working towards? the character of worldliness or unreal profession of Christ? or that of the Christ and His saints?

'O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, Grant us Thy peace.'

'O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy upon us.'

45. THE BINDING OF SATAN CONTRASTED WITH THE 'FIRST RESURRECTION' OF THE FAITHFUL. XX. 1-6.

Satan has been bound once for all; Christians receive new Life from God once for all. '1,000 years' symbolizes a perfect work of God, manifested in earthly time, but valid for eternity. 'God's thousand years are as one day' (2 Pet. III. 8).

A. Jesus, represented here by an Angel, has authority to imprison Satan in his realm of wickedness, or to allow him still to act as he desires in his enmity against God, and against man as God's creation, for he is Satan (our adversary), devil (deceiver), man's subtle tempter, the dragon of chapter XIII. The victory of righteous obedience to God was perfect, as manifested on Calvary; Satan could work no evil, unless God allowed it. As our Lord's Body was placed in the tomb of death, sealed by His enemies, but God raised Him from the dead to carry on His saving work for man, so Satan, completely shut up in his evil sphere, is allowed to be loosed to test the lives of men as to whether they are content to live in the love of God (1-3).

Rejoice that God gives us grace to conquer in temptation. 'To this end the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.'

B. The faithful are called to share in our Lord's judgement. In life and death they were eager to suffer with Him; they are free from taint of sin; they share in His life and authority (4). There are others who have not learned Christ, or, though baptized, have not given themselves wholly to God. These are to wait in the unseen world till the full purpose of God for His Church is manifested. In the eternal Life given to them, in Baptism or, maybe, after death, they have the power of rising to new life. All who truly share in this 'resurrection' (no second resurrection is spoken of) cannot be touched by the 'second death', the death to God through sin. They too may share in our Lord's priesthood and authority to the full (5, 6).

'Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him; and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for His merits, who died, and was buried and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.'

C. God wants us to become wholly free from sin, and wholly one in spirit with Jesus and His saints. 'Ye shall be perfect' (all the possibilities of our redeemed nature fulfilled) 'even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

'God made me to know Him, love Him, and serve Him, and to be happy with Him for ever.'

46. THE END OF THE TRIBULATION CAUSED BY SIN ON EARTH.

XX. 7-15.

We have a double vision: (a) Satan, conquered, but still allowed to tempt, is banished, with his emissaries, to his own place; (b) the final judgement of our lives, for reward or condemnation.

A. Though Satan has been completely and finally overcome by our Lord, the most determined attempts of the evil power are seen in this last generation. Satan goes through the world to enlist all God's enemies against Him. The symbol of such attack is found in Ezekiel's vision of 'Gog' and his nation, 'Magog', seen there as rapacious and cruel invaders of the territory of God (7, 8). They attack every place where God's children have pitched their tent, and the whole Church of God. But the 'fire' of God's 'wrath' takes possession of them (9). Satan is banished to the hell which he has chosen, with his two emissaries. They can have no escape from it (10).

'From all evil and mischief; from sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil; from Thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord deliver us.'

B. The Throne of God is seen. In the full revelation of God and His relation to man this world and its time, with merely human aims in life, no longer have any place. The false basis of living for self is no more, for God is seen as All in all (11). Now is fully disclosed God's purpose for man—Life eternal for His faithful, condemnation for all who refuse His love. We are judged according to the way we have lived (12). The 'sea' of sin gives up those who are submerged in it. The darkness which death and the unseen future after death means to those who reject the knowledge of God gives up its prisoners. They have refused Jesus, who 'has the keys of death and of Hades' (13). Death and Hades belong to the fire of untrue and hateful thought and action in hell. This is the 'second death'. All who have not given themselves to follow God's purpose for them are lost to God and truth (14, 15).

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

C. Pray for all sinners, that they may come to Jesus with deep repentance, that He may save them from the 'wrath of God'.

'Almighty God, we beseech Thee to hear our prayers for all such as sin against Thee, or neglect to serve Thee; that Thou wouldest vouchsafe to bestow upon them true repentance, and an earnest longing for Thy service; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

47. 'BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.' XXI. 1-8.

Into a world held down from its true life in ungodliness and unrighteousness there came through the Cross and Resurrection One whose mission from God is to make all things new. Into that new life brought by Jesus we are initiated by our New Birth, with its vast possibilities. 'I came that they may have Life and have it abundantly.' We have a vision of what it is to produce in our lives. XXI. 1-8.

A. God being fully revealed, the aims and aspirations of a world which does not realize Him, and the earthly setting of their lives, is gone. The 'sea' of sin is no more. The atmosphere of the new heaven and earth is the presence of God (1). The Church of God is seen, offered to man, now ready for its perfect union in and with the Christ, the Son of God (2). Jesus, God's Tabernacle of meeting with man, is with us, bringing us into the full presence of God, eagerly accepted by His people. The atmosphere of sin is passed away, with all the troubles which it has brought in its train (3, 4). The Author of this new Life is Jesus, the whole Word of God to man ('Alpha and Omega', 1. 8), the 'Author and Finisher of our faith' (5, 6).

'Unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only Wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.'

B. Jesus will grant to those who are athirst for the glory of God the 'water' of the manifold grace of His Holy Spirit. It is they who 'overcome', as in chapters II and III, in the contest against temptation and for holiness who have 'the right to come to the Tree of Life' (XXII. 14) and 'the right to become children of God' (John 1. 12) (7).

'O God, the King of glory, who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven; we beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort (strengthen) us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end.'

C. But our Lord in His earthly sojourn and now would bid us to remember the terrible results of sin in our human life, from which may God deliver us, as we learn more and more to repent truly of our sins (8).

'Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the Life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.'

48. THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IS THE PERFECTED CHURCH, THE CITY OF GOD. XXI. 9-14.

God's purpose for His Church is presented to us under the symbol of an earthly city. The details of the symbolism cannot be made into a mental picture of such a building; but each part has its spiritual meaning.

A. One of the 'seven Angels' of our Lord in His Church, seen as ministers in the judgement of the 'Bowls', is now commissioned to show the glory of the Church as one with the Lord and Saviour of the world (9). Our Lord in His temptation saw the great worldly cities of the future, out of which it was His mission to build up the City of God. The worldly city was of the earth, earthly, this is of the region of heaven, heavenly (10). In chapter IV the 'jasper' with its pure flashing light marked the vision of God's holiness; that is now seen lightening up the City of God (11). It is separated from the enemies of God by the 'great wall' of God's providence. There are twelve portals of entrance, the faith in Christ ('12') who is Himself the Door (John x. 1), ministered to by the Angels of His presence, and inscribed with the character ('names') of the whole company of God from the beginning of the world, under the symbol of Church of Israel (12). Its citizens are gathered from every part and age of the world (13). On its ground, which is Christ, are laid the '12' foundation stones of the Apostles of the Lamb (14).

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'

B. Consider how the Church in every place should be radiating out the Light of God, showing in the lives of its adherents the character of the Christ, to draw souls out of worldliness into Christian penitence and faith.

Mourn for the feebleness of witness for Christ in the Church which should witness for Him in every place and throughout the world. 'O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against Thee. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do. Defer not, for Thine own sake, O our God; for we, Thy people, are called by Thy Name.'

C. Each one of us has his own contribution to make to the glory of God in His Church; by strong prayer that Christ may be glorified; by example of true Christian life in ourselves; by all that makes for unity of believers in Christ; by giving ourselves in penitence and faith to swell the chorus of worship in the Church.

'Father, glorify Thy Son in us, that the Son may glorify Thee.'

49. THE CHURCH IS ADORNED AND SET APART THAT GOD MAY DWELL IN IT. XXI. 15-21.

The Church is no mere confederacy of men choosing a certain way of life. It is God's own Tabernacle on earth, the supreme place of His meeting with man through His Incarnate Son.

A. The Angel of Christ in His Church measures it, to set it apart for God in every aspect (15). Its type is found in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, which was a perfect cube. The '12,000 furlongs' is no mere human measure, but shows the Church as built up of the faith in Christ ('12'), now fulfilled in the '1,000' of God's perfection (15, 16). The wall shows man's faith in God through Christ (12×12), built up through the ages. Man can grasp its meaning; the Angel represents man, as well as the Christ, in His Church (17). The Light of God's holiness surrounds the City of God, transparent to our faith, while the city itself is of most precious material, transparent in the same Light (18). That which is founded on the Christ and His Apostles radiates glorious light with varieties of character which blend together in perfect harmony (19, 20). The portals show 'the pearl of great price' (Matt. XIII. 45, 46), the example and teaching of the Christ. The street in which Jesus walks amongst us is glorious transparent lives of most precious character (21).

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'

B. The Seer saw in vision this city of God flowing down out of heaven, that we may even here on earth live 'in heavenly places in Christ', knowing that 'our citizenship is in heaven'. Great promises of God are constantly fulfilled through His Church. Through the Church we receive eternal Life in our Baptism, and the food to sustain that Life in our Communion. Through it we receive the Holy Spirit in our Confirmation, to direct and guide us into service of God and man. Through it we, as penitents, receive the assurance of pardon and restoration to right relation to God. The Church makes it possible for us to worship God in fellowship with all people of God.

'O my God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.'

C. In answer to this we are so to think and speak and act that our daily life may be a contribution to the glory of the Church as the pure Bride of Christ.

Is our life so? 'My God, I hope in Thee for grace and for glory, because of Thy promises, Thy mercy, and Thy power.'

50. THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CITY OF GOD. XXI. 22-27.

The ideal Church of God's purpose is before us. But remember that its characteristics should be represented in the Church on earth now, as indeed they have been represented in the past. To us, who are brought by our Baptism into eternal Life before God, and fellowship with one another as members of the Body of Christ, who live, as it were, in the antechamber of the kingdom of God, these visions come, calling us to realize that even now we are living and acting day by day in the presence of God. In this consciousness we are to make the glory of God through Christ the dominant motive of our lives, the master-sentiment of our actions.

A. In and through Christ we are restored to the simple and natural sense of the presence of God, which man lost through sin. In the fellowship of worship we go out far beyond that part of the fellowship in Christ which is present visibly with us, to the consciousness of the 'communion of saints' before the Throne (22). The Light by which we think, and speak, and act is no longer the self-motives which tempt us even in our faith, but the Christ with us and in us pursuing the motive of all His human life, the glory of God (23).

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love.'

B. It is in this spirit that we are to offer ourselves to promote the kingdom of God in the world. We are to work towards the fulfilment of the great promise that national life and human influences, abandoning mere earthly motives, should take as their inspiration the will of God in the Light of His Incarnate Son. We look forward to the utter banishment of the darkness caused by sin, and see Jesus as 'the Door' calling to all who can come out of worldliness into the Light (24-6).

Consider how far you have reached such loving obedience to God as a man of God expressed before the Incarnation—'Thy word is a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my paths.'

C. Here is understanding. Nothing that is not fit to be offered to God ('unclean' in the ritual sense), nothing that is tainted by sin, nothing that is based on disloyalty to truth revealed by Christ, who says, 'I am the Truth', can find a place in the holy City, but only they whom Jesus knows as His own (27).

Here is our hope—We, being 'taken captive by the Lord's Servant to the will of God', 'reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit'.

51. PARADISE, THE GARDEN OF GOD, REGAINED. XXII. 1-5.

This wonderful book sums up the whole story of mankind, the story of God's search for man, and man's search for God, as shown in the Scriptures of the Old and New Covenants. As every symbol and vision of the book recalls utterances of the Prophets, or reminiscences of the worship of the Church of the Israelite nation, so in this section the old story of the Garden of Eden influences the heart and mind of the Seer.

A. We are shown first the river of Paradise as the ceaseless, beneficent flow of the grace of God the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father through the Divine and human Son in the midst of the true children of God, amongst whom, as in I. 13, Jesus walks. Our Lord is seen as the 'Tree of Life', the Food of Life eternal. On the one side of the River of Life is His fruit, the Life of God given to the redeemed; on the other its leaves are for the healing of many, who, living a godly life, have not yet known the Saviour. In both aspects it is marked by the '12' of the fruits and the months—the sign of God dwelling in man through Christ (1-2).

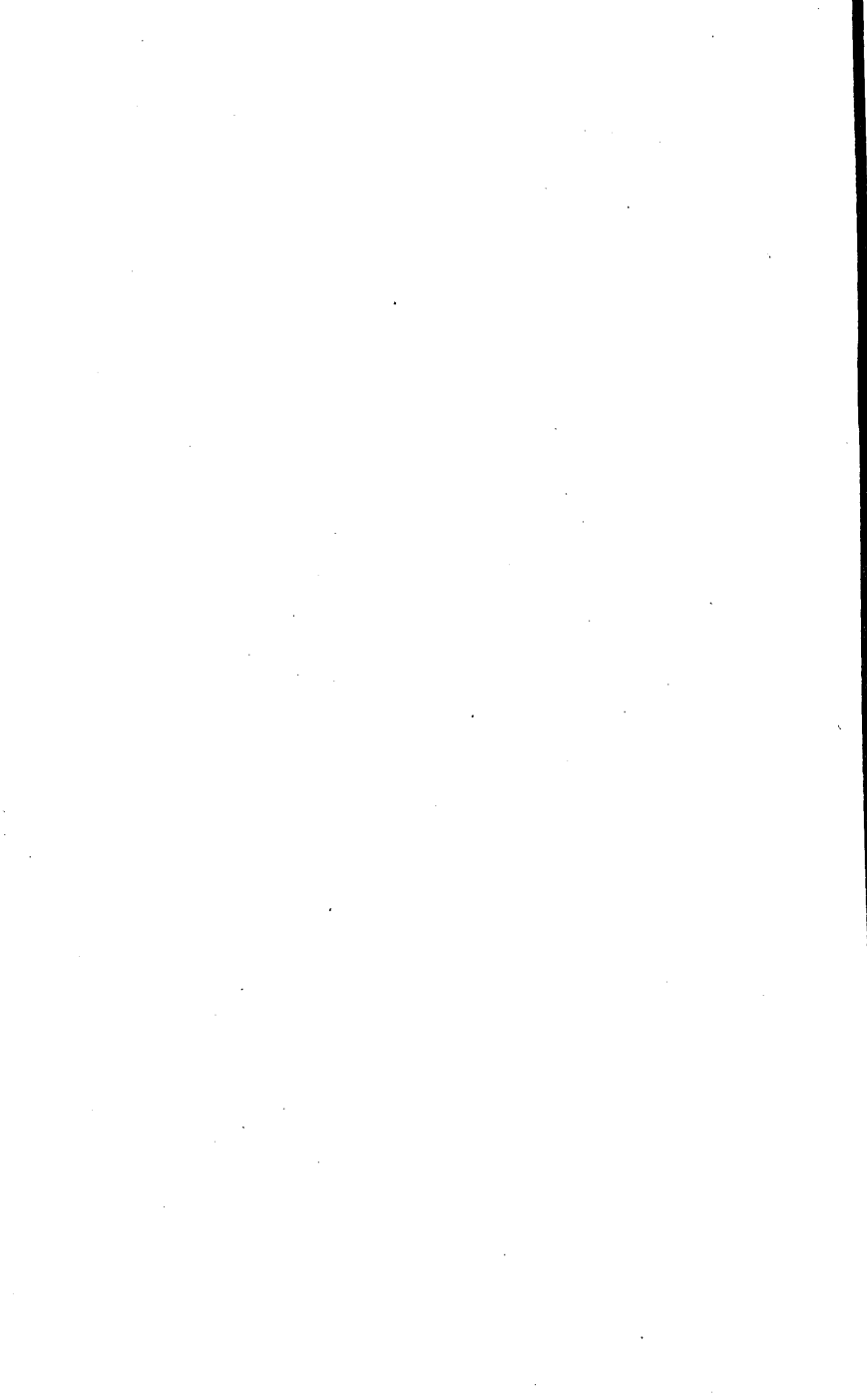
Rejoice in faith, hope, and love: 'I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life.' 'I believe in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind.' 'I believe in God the Father, who hath created me and all the world.'

B. The sin which has brought a curse on the whole course of human life is utterly banished. The consciousness of God fills every heart with utmost joy in Love and Redemption. The true thrill of life is untarnished in souls wholly given to God's service, in whom God is revealed in full Light. The dark night of sin is gone, banished by the Light. The King, whom God has given to man, has given Himself as Man wholly to the service of God and the redeemed mankind, who have learned from Him to give themselves to serve God and man with Him (3-5).

'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'

C. The keynote of a life acceptable to God is the giving of ourselves in Christ to loving service of God and man. Such giving of self lies at the root of all reality. God is the eternal Giver: Jesus gives Himself wholly: we, giving ourselves in ever deepening penitence and faith, would trust in the grace of the Holy Ghost to conform us to the image of Christ.

'O Jesus, who didst die for us, grant us so to die to all that would draw us away from Thyself, that, when the hour of our departure arrives, we may die loving Thee, and in Thy sacred arms.'



SECTION VII

CHAPTER XXII. 6 to end

Our Lord's last Messages to His Church.

'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the Tree of Life, and may enter in by the gates into the City.'

'Yea, I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.'

Jerusalem the Golden.

Canst see afar Jerusalem the Golden?

'Nay, friend, not yet: the City mist-enfolden
Still lieth hidden, or mine eyes are holden.'

Yet from afar unnumbered Saints are crying:

'There shall be no more sorrow, no more sighing,
For ever and for ever no more dying.'

One day, thine eyes shall be no longer holden:

The Sacramental Veil shall be unfolden,
And then, ah then, Jerusalem the Golden.

G. W.

52. A MESSAGE OF GOD TO HIS CHILDREN STILL LIVING ON EARTH.
XXII. 6-15.

The last chapter of the fourth Gospel tells of our Lord, just before His Ascension, showing to His Church what kind of life they are to lead as the sequel to His Resurrection and Ascension, when He is to be withdrawn from human sight. So now, after this great revelation of God's purpose, we are warned to give ourselves to follow out that which we have seen and heard.

A. The message given in the book is full of the faith by which men see truth and reality. It sums up the teaching of inspired servants of God through the ages. It reveals the purpose of God, as it may be realized in the generation between the Incarnation and the end of time. These words of the Angel, representing the Christ in unfolding to human faith the scenes of the book, are followed by the declaration by our Lord Himself of the attitude of true faith in His disciples. They are to be ever ready to welcome Him, whenever and wherever He 'comes' (manifests Himself amongst us) (6, 7). The Seer would worship the Angel, in whom he sees the glory of the Christ, but the Angel, one of God's created beings, is but one of the servants of God who bring His messages to man (8, 9). The Angel commands the Seer to make known what he has seen and heard. It is not to be a sealed book. While the full mystery of God's dealing with man now has been disclosed, no man will or can be forced to follow its light. The Light shines out, but it is for us to choose by our free will the way of spiritual death, or that of Life (10, 11).

Praise God—'The Lord is gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great goodness.'

B. The Christ Himself again speaks, with all authority. His purpose is to manifest Himself to believers and to adjudge the rewards of men. For He is the full Word of God to man, the author and finisher of the drama of human life (12, 13). They who through repentance come to Jesus for pardon have the right to come to the Tree of Life and enter the City of God, while sinners, like 'pariah dogs' cast out, have no share in these (12-15).

'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.'

C. We all need habitual repentance, not only for moral offences committed, but also for failure to realize and work for the forward movement in holiness and following the Christ revealed to us. We should also believe much more that Jesus desires to restore our lives into such consistent forward movement.

'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

53. 'COME, LORD JESUS.' XXII. 16-21.

Our Lord taught us to make the glory of God the primary object of our prayers. This is shown very clearly in the Prayer which He gave us as our model ('After this manner pray ye'). The Apocalypse, the culmination of God's revelation, shows Jesus as God's appointed Word to Man, and as Master and Ruler, ever active amongst us on earth. So the lesson of the New Covenant is added to that of the Old Covenant. Jesus is to man 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life'. It is to be the constant longing prayer of His Church that He may be manifested always and everywhere.

A. Jesus assures us that the revelation, now given to man through an Angel representative, is His own personal message to His Church. It is the consummation of all God's special revelation in the Church of Israel, of which He is the Root and the Life, and of God's purpose of the Incarnation, in which He is manifested as the Morning Star of eternal Life brought to us on earth (16). Stirred to deep thrill by this revelation, the Church, whose life is bound up in the grace of God the Holy Ghost, calls to Jesus to 'Come'—to manifest Himself amongst us, as the Fountain from which the grace of the Holy Spirit flows (17).

So, under the influence of all we learn in the book, we try to pray as being athirst for God, 'COME, LORD JESUS'.

B. Inspired by the Holy Ghost, the Seer warns us of the great danger of tampering in any way with the message of God thus given (18, 19).

The vital message of the book is that now, in this last generation of God's revelation of Himself to man, we are to be supremely conscious of the intimate working of God through Christ in all the vicissitudes of our personal, social, and national life. We, who know Him, are to take as the inner core of our thought, and the aim of all our endeavours, that God through Christ, by His Holy Spirit, may be fully glorified in us. So in view of our own lives, of the society in which we live, of our nation, of the whole world, we try to put still more longing into the desire, 'COME, LORD JESUS'.

C. The Seer hears and writes for us the last words of Jesus in the marvellous book, 'Yea, I come quickly', and His own answer for the Church, 'Amen: Come, Lord Jesus'. Kneeling in spirit with the whole Church of the faithful, we receive the Seer's blessing on all true children of God (20, 21).

We respond with full heart and deep resolve,

'AMEN: COME, LORD JESUS.'

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